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LUTHER B. ANTHONY

The **DRAMATIST**

*A Journal of Dramatic
Technology*

Edited by
LUTHER B. ANTHONY

Vols. I II and III

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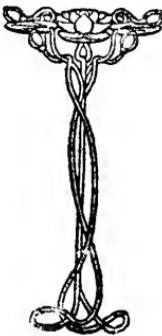
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Introduction

If there is one principle of playrighting that we have insisted upon in these pages more than all others, it is that the audience KNOW. In the closing quarter of this year of our Lord 1912 we are still quite alone in this contention. Complete ignorance on the part of the audience can only result in negative interest: surprise. Surprise is the tool of the fiction writer. Knowledge or expectation in some degree is the indispensable condition for generating suspense. If you, dear student, cannot grasp this subtle dramatic law at the outset, we ask that you take it on faith, as most of our knowledge is accepted, until its inevitable operation can be verified.

There is one other ingredient that we continually cry for: Conflict. Conflict is a character creator in two senses. In life there is no such thing as acquiring character without conflict. In drama there is no illusion of character possible without a stage Conflict to mold it in. Conflict is the die that casts character. And this is the secret of the salutary power of drama. Of all moral instruction it is the most effectual. A gripping play is the nearest substitute for the actual character-creating process of life.

L. B. A.

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OCTOBER

New Plays

Harken to the parable of the press agent and you would be persuaded that the author of this remarkable Play was only yesterday a Pittsburg glass-blower. In reality, Mr. Edward Locke, like all other arrivals in stageland, is a graduate of the University of Hard Knocks. He has learned technic through repeated failures and from years of experience as actor and newspaper man. The unrivaled triumph of his first great play lies in its elemental simplicity of direct appeal to the sympathies of every-day people. This characteristic permeates the plot which is set forth in but three acts, the cast which involves only four people and introduces them in the first five minutes of the Play, the stage setting which requires but one set scene and the theme which is approximately confined to its legitimate circumference. The Play abounds in minor flaws and elements foreign to the structure and the "Climax" when reached is merely talked into the audience instead of coming out of dramatic invention. The rascal who has tricked a girl into marriage calmly relates his unscrupulousness instead of being detected in a truly dramatic manner and the effort to reconcile the girl to such treachery on the plea that this rascal's half-hearted love has matured certain tone qualities in her voice is the merest apology for plot! What is the theme of the Play? Seeking a wife through dishonest means! Can there be but one answer to this proposition? The play leaves the verdict to the audience. Drama must be definite or it is not Drama. The logical end and climax of this Play is reached when this rascal is exposed, and the girl's voice is recovered. The only word for him is: "Beat it!" If our theme dealt with this girl's love for this man we might finish with some solution of love but in no sense is her love established and any attempt to make it a part of the play is simply a departure from the immutable limits of the given theme and a step toward the construction of a distinct and separate plot. Love is not a factor in this play and cannot be spliced onto it! The framework of "The Climax" is ideal structure for a play. The acts are ideal divisions of the material. They define the Beginning, the middle and end of a completed action in a very skillful way. The blending of plot theme with

melody theme is a master stroke and the Play deserves its place in the ranks, far to the front!

IS MATRIMONY A FAILURE

A Successful Adaptation.

There is one peculiarity about this work by Mr. Leo Dietrichstein that deserves a word of comment and commendation. Out of a reigning Berlin success this author has made an American comedy! It sounds impossible, perhaps, but he has done his work with rare skill, transposing atmosphere, colloquialisms and character.

Unlike most adaptations the work is clean and free from the odor of vulgarity. But the point that is of value to the aspiring dramatists of this country is the fact that here is a triumph as a result of the strenuous study of technic without the aid of inventive genius required to construct an original Play.

This should be a source of hope and inspiration to the Dramatist who feels after repeated attempts that he does not possess the required degree of creative imagination. There is a wide chance in the field of adaptation and dramatization for utilizing the fancy of others. But the one ever necessary requisite is—Technical skill! If you cannot be a Fitch be a Dietrichstein!

THE RINGMASTER.

The season thus far has not brought forth any plays remarkable for their technical merit such as "The Easiest Way" and "The Climax" of last year but we call attention to "The Ringmaster" more for its want of technic, the negative study often being a more potent lesson than the ideal drama.

Here we have the making of a bully good play with a couple of well built scenes but encumbered by the traditional desire to "ring in" an abundance of sentiment and comedy. For this purpose the author calls into existence a sister of the Ringmaster who does a wireless, sea-sick, champagne stunt just to delay the principal action of the Play; and a pair of juvenile lovers whose vicissitudes belong to a skit for the vaudeville stage and not in "The Ringmaster."

For want of Scene Units in the structure a superfluity of characters is mortgaged onto the production and Drama sleeps while these useless accessories apologize for their intrusion. There is a good scene where the daughter unconsciously denounces the unscrupulous business methods of her father, the Ringmaster of Wall Street, in accusing the innocent party of the crimes actually committed by her parent.

Without a doubt the Play for need of skillful technical treatment. It smacks of the old school of double stories and bi-plots and fails to conform to the new type of Drama so clearly defined in recent successes.

S A M U E L J O H N S O N , P L A Y W R I G H T .

David Garrick and Dr. Samuel Johnson were warm friends. Johnson could write a dictionary but not a Play. After a futile attempt to stage "Irene," a tragedy especially written for the actor, Garrick made the following allusion: "When Johnson writes Drama, declamation roars whilst passion sleeps. When Shakespeare wrote he dipped his pen in the blood of humanity."

Will some one kindly tell us why the author of a gem like "Rasselas" could not write Drama? Was it because he tried to write it and not build it? Shakespeare studied Play building along with stage building! As an actor he acquired the Dramatic conscience which is invaluable to the dramatist. If Johnson could have said to Garrick: "David, teach me what you know about the laws of dramatic construction," doubtless the two might have made a fair play of "Irene." But Garrick was Johnson's pupil to begin with and the writer of dictionaries was not a man to be taught!

Lytton-Bulwer, on the other hand, had a similar experience with Macready, the famous actor-manager, and profited by the association and advice of an expert in stagecraft. Although a noted writer of the narrative class of composition Bulwer failed utterly in his early attempt at playwriting. "The Duchess de la Vailliere." Critics declared that it was not in his power to attain the Art of dramatic construction and theatrical effect. Macready came to the rescue! It was a union of imagination and craft. Macready wrought wonders in the re-shaping of Bulwer's plays and his next offering, "The Lady of Lyons," is a sample of what "Rasselas" might have been had Johnson yielded to the same available expedient.

A N O T H E R D E C L A R A T I O N O F I N D E P E N D E N C E

John Bull Backing American Play Builders.

The Progressive Play Producing Association is the name of a co-operative company being formed for the purpose of producing N. Y. successes in London and the English Provinces. The tide has turned, my brother! American managers are no longer dependent upon European dramatists for high-class plays! The success of Henry E. Dixey's "The Man on the Box" and of James Forbes' "The Chorus Lady," recently produced in London are practical proof of the drift dramatic tides have taken. Here is a double source of income for

the Playwright. Pinero, Barrie and Jones have long reaped a Yankee harvest—Johnnie Bull must now pay toll for Uncle Sam's attractions!

N A T U R A L - B O R N N E S S

The following article is written by Arthur F. Sheldon, who calls his great institution "A School of Scientific Salesmanship." It is virtually a University of Character Construction formulating the Science of SELF—A study of infinite value to the dramatist who also is a salesman, or should be!

One good thing about those of this class who are truly great is their progressiveness. They recognize the fact that "the world do move" and they move right along with it. They see clearly that no one is so great that he cannot become greater. They realize that knowledge is power and they grasp every opportunity to add to their store of knowledge, both general and specific.

"They acquire all the general knowledge possible because they know that the broader their range of knowledge, the better can they appeal to, and put themselves in tune with, the vastly varied degrees of intelligence and types of human nature with which they come in contact.

"They recognize quickly the value of all specific knowledge pertaining to their own special business of salesmanship, for they realize the fact that their business is a science and the practice of it a profession.

"But there are dangers in being a 'natural-born.' The incentive for work, application and perseverance is largely taken away from the man who inherits a fortune, whether it be in money or natural gifts of qualities.

"He comes to rely so thoroughly upon natural gifts that he does not go ahead in the work of self-development, and he leans so hard upon those natural gifts that he sometimes wears them out or breaks them down. He comes to a point pretty soon where his natural gifts will not keep him going ahead, and then he commences going backward, for there is no such thing as standing still.

"J. I. C., Maud S., Sunol, Pink Coat, Wyeth and Lou Dillon were all 'natural-born' trotters, runners or pacers, but suppose their owners had rested content with their good breeding, their pedigrees, their 'natural-born-ness,' and had not employed scientific trainers to develop their speed, do you suppose they would have broken world's records and won great races? Not at all. Horses that were not so well blessed in their 'borning,' as the old lady said, but who got down to earth and worked hard would have made them go way back in the stable or pasture and lie down. Don't you think so?

"Now let us go back to mother earth for an illustration. The richest natural soil will not produce its richest harvests except by cultivation. If left alone as nature made it, its owner will not continue to reap abundantly unless he tends, cultivates, enriches and develops it. Without scientific care, it will soon lose its strength and begin to go backward. With that care, its productiveness is ever on the increase.

"And to come to man in the line of intellectual effort. Lord Byron was without question a natural-born poet. But do you suppose his name would now be written among the immortals had he not cultivated the talents which nature gave him? At fifteen years of age he had studied and largely digested some 1,500 volumes. He became the master of many languages. He enriched his mind. He recognized that knowledge was power. He cultivated his natural gifts. He developed them, and he became truly great and left a lasting fame.

"And so we might go on and on with illustrations without end, to show how unwise, how dangerous, how absolutely foolish it is to neglect natural gifts. They are but the foundation upon which to build. They should be honored and reverenced and cared for as precious gifts, and the possessor of them should bestow upon them his tenderest care.

"I hope you see clearly, therefore, that I in no way belittle the fact and the value of natural gifts; but, on the other hand, I want you to see clearly how foolish it is to make the claim that because one is born that way he cannot become stronger by scientific cultivation.

"And now I want you to see just as clearly the fact that it is just as foolish to say that unless one is a 'natural-born salesman' he can never become a great salesman.

"Listen to me now while I tell you the truth. I would rather undertake to make a great salesman out of one who was not born with great natural gifts in that direction than to undertake to make a truly great salesman out of one with those natural gifts who is not progressive enough to see the importance of cultivating and developing those natural gifts.

"Do you see clearly what I mean? It, in one sense, is the old case of the tortoise and the hare. The hare, depending upon his natural fleetness, went to sleep; but the tortoise kept on trying, plugged right along, and beat Mr. Hare out in the race.

"Let us go back to mother earth for another illustration. Were you ever out in Colorado or Wyoming or any of those districts that are, or were, arid wastes, with a soil in which nothing good would grow? If you have been there, you have seen here a strip of that barren land upon which nothing good is growing, and there by its side a soil once just like it in every respect, which is now yielding in most bountiful abundance.

"The natural elements of great abundance were there all the time, and had been for ages; all that land needed was the application of scientific irrigation and cultivation in order to develop its productiveness.

"And did you ever see the little old gnarled crab-apple tree, with its sour and bitter fruit, and counted by the farmer a failure? And have you seen some one come along who understood that nature could be assisted by grafting a sprout of useful fruit upon its body or one of its limbs? Have you watched that sprout grow and its fruit ripen into the luscious Pippin or Baldwin or some other fine apple that made our hearts glad and our mouths water when we were boys? Oh! Nature teaches us lots of lessons if we will only look and listen and believe.

"And now let us come to man, the highest type of creation and the only creature blessed with reason.

"Because he was born a certain way, must he always remain in that natural state? Is he the only one of nature's productions which is chained by environment and natural conditions? Is he a slave to inherited traits? No! No! If he will but use his greatest gift, the one so great that God gave it to none but him—reason, pure, reason, I mean—he can break the strongest chains that bind; he can change the most barren soil and can make it produce what harvest and what fruit he wills it to produce.

"Millions have been sleeping long enough. The night of misunderstanding of their own possibilities has been long enough. The day of truth is here, and it's time to wake up. Wake! O man, and know you have it in your power to become what you will.

"And now let me tell you what it seems to me is one of the drugs which has caused so many to sleep so long in utter unconsciousness of their own possibilities of development. It is the fact of the world's accepting as facts many things that are nothing more than falsehoods. And the one who first gave utterance to statements concerning man's inability to outgrow unfavorable 'natural-born-ness' may have been either an honest man who made a mistake, or an insincere man who was trying to say something smart.

"Some one, generations ago, said something that sounded all right. The world liked it and handed it down to the next generation, which passed it along to its children, who passed it along to the next generation, which assimilated it, until it finally became a part of the human race and was accepted universally as the truth, when, as a matter of fact, it was all the time 'a lie, and the truth abode not in it.' It has been a drug of misunderstanding all this time, deadening the senses and narrowing the possibilities of millions of human beings.

"It continues to do its deadening work until the X-ray of concentrated thought comes along and reveals its true nature, and then the world first laughs and scoffs and jeers at the voice of truth; then it listens, and pretty soon it says: 'Why, yes, of course, I always knew that old foggy statement was false.' And then everybody hurries up to get into the band wagon of truth, while the band of enlightenment plays the march of progress.

"The old statement and belief that the world was flat was handed down this way for ages, and everybody believed it. There are races today which bow down to and worship wooden gods and tell their children it is true and right for them to so worship; that their pleasure will bless and their wrath will curse; and the children believe it and hand this lie on down to their children. And so do false ideas of religion and mistakes in every line of thought dam—and damn—the current of progress, until the discernment and courage of truth points the way to better things. Those who are bold enough to smash the graven images of falsehood and error do the world good.

"Did you know that Swoboda and Sandow, two of the strongest men in the world today physically, were born weaklings? Ah, but you say, that's a different thing. You can develop muscle by certain methods but you cannot develop those mental, moral and spiritual qualities which go to make certain characteristics.

"But please do not make such a statement, my good friend, until you have looked into modern science as applied to character building. If you will reserve your judgment until you look into that, you will never make the mistake of counting yourself so weak and powerless as all that.

"Blessed with reason, the greatest gift of God to man, backed up by real desire to do and be, reinforced by the courage which makes you dare to try, and with the energy which puts all these to the test of application and perseverance, you are absolutely the architect of your own future; the actual builder of your own self; and you can build as you will, and will realize that verily the reason most men do not accomplish more is because they do not attempt more."

T H E I N T E L L E C T U A L D R A M A T I S T .

Ibsen, Klein and Others.

Schopenhauer told us that simplicity was a mark of truth—of Genius! And warned the writer against a manifest endeavor to exhibit more intellect than he possessed! The romantic nature in many persons leads them to soar above the common herd into the realm of the muses little knowing that such flights betray more of the "manifest endeavor" than intelligence.

As a practical lesson in the paramount importance of simplicity in Dramatic Art let us take the life and evolution of Ibsen as a master Dramatist. "Peer Gynt," "Brand" and "Emperor and Galilian," are three high art specimens written in accordance with the ideals of literary critics but as Plays they are far from the pungency and skill of Ibsen's later realistic Drama. For this great playwright whilst he ascended technically had to come down the ladder of intellectual analysis and apply his attacks on idealism to the everyday people of everyday life.

Here he found his greatest scope for demonstrating idealism as a social force. Not in the production of Art for art's sake—emperors, saints and romantic personages but in the homely, familiar species like doctors, parsons, bankers and builders such as he employed in the "Pillars of Society."

This transition in the life of Ibsen the Dramatist is a tremendous endorsement in favor of simplicity in dramatic composition. No highly intellectual scholar has made a successful dramatist for this very reason. He cannot see with the eyes of the multitude nor feel with their hearts. And few are the instances where experience has triumphed in teaching very learned minds that a descent from the heights of philosophic illusion is the only path to playwriting!

It is freedom from these scholarly fetters that explains the remarkable rise of certain playwrights. They are not hampered with learning! They spring from the ranks of the common people and know well the call of the herd!

Charles Klein might be cited as a most conspicuous example of this type of successful dramatist. In neither of his two pronounced successes, "The Music Master" nor "The Lion and the Mouse," is intellectual supremacy or even technical skill the dominant factor. They are not psychological fantasies, they are crude Plays telling a simple tale in familiar, homely heart language! There is even an over-abundance of ordinary life in them, ordinary in the sense of being superfluous. But by hook or crook some sort of interest is kept going in each and the Play starts creeping at the tag end of the first Act, and manages to hold interest till the curtain falls.

In "The Third Degree" a perceptible improvement in the author's technic is noted. He has relinquished the antiquated form of double story in a play and maintains his vigilant adherence to the throbbing of the heartstrings. Do not gain the impression that this faculty has come to Mr. Klein without years of patient toil and observation. In fact the lack of technic might indicate more observation and research for situation than structure as is evinced in his use of the popular hypnotic device in his latest Play.

Have we made a clear case against the ineffectiveness of the intellectual author? It is quite a journey from Ibsen to Klein but who can say that in simplicity of structure and real dramatic force such plays as the above and "Paid in Full," "A Happy Marriage," "The Witching Hour" and "The Climax" are not the eve of an evolution in playbuilding that will out-Ibsenize Ibsen?

"IT IS MORE PROFITABLE TO RECKON UP OUR DEFECTS THAN TO BOAST OF OUR ATTAINMENTS."—Carlyle.

"GET BUSY!" IS THE SLOGAN OF THE AGE! IT REQUIRES NOT TALKERS BUT DOERS! SAME WITH DRAMA—DON'T TALK! ACT!

A

Play is the lengthened shadow of a man—the man who writes it.

Yes, he is a miracle of genius because he is a miracle of labor; because instead of trusting to the resources of his own single mind he has ransacked a thousand minds; because he makes use of the accumulated wisdom of ages and takes as his point of departure the very last line and boundary to which science has advanced; because it has ever been the object of his life to assist every intellectual gift of Nature, however munificent and however splendid, with every resource that art could suggest and every attention that diligence could bestow.

—Business Philosopher.

The DRAMATIST

LUTHER B. ANTHONY, Editor

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No. 2

QUARTERLY

1910

JANUARY

The 1909 Record

How Many Young Authors Master the Fundamentals?
ONE IN 500.

Out of fifteen thousand plays by unknown authors sent to managers during 1909 thirty were accepted! What of the remaining fourteen thousand nine hundred and seventy? Managers unanimously agree that the great majority of them gave no evidence whatever of a mastery even of the fundamentals of dramatic construction! 500 to !!! Is the proportion overwhelming? Begin the New Year with a resolution to reduce that fourteen thousand! Study your art!

MANAGERS HUNTING FEVERISHLY FOR PLAYS.

Theatres Close for Want of Attractions.

What does it all mean? Is it possible that there is actually a dearth of plays? Is the demand greater than the supply in a profession that surpasses all others as a short cut to fame and fortune? For surely no other occupation brings a man half a million dollars for a year's work! There is no scarcity of plays of the sort that answered the purpose only a few years back, but the fact of the matter is that an entirely new species has developed in Drama in this short space of time. This transition is due to the awakening of the audience. The public of this strenuous age has become many times more critical and has ceased to submit to the irrational artificiality heretofore served up as Drama.

The old style play was a mere vehicle for the absurd hysteria of the emotional capacities of the actor. The new or naturalistic type depicts life in its real aspects exposing its virtues and vices and drawing conclusions therefrom. We only need refer to the plays of yesterday to see in the philosophy of many writers, this tenor: Put it on the stage and the people will think it is true. The play of today and of the future is the one whose author carefully considers the logic of his average onlooker if not the severest test that sound common sense will

afford. This is an era of Scientific thought and the most magnificent discovery of the searching modern spirit is the presence of law, order and harmony in all the world around us; that creation is not a chaos, a collection of simple isolated facts, but that all is correlative and interdependent.

The same law holds true of the highest and best of human creations. Art is Nature passed through the alembic of man. The reign of law has crept into every department of life transforming knowledge everywhere into Science. And the pursuit of law is the passion of Science. Our finest mental structures are built upon laws or principles and every branch of modern education has a classified knowledge resolving in general laws and scientific principles. For the first time in the history of Dramatic Literature can Drama boast of a Science! The Science of Drama shows the student the underlying laws and interdependent principles upon which good plays must be constructed. It is this enlightened method of studying the Art of Playwriting that has enabled Dramatists to advance the standards of plays to meet the modern demand for higher Art. The imbecile play does not fit the scientific spectator!

This new type of play is clearly defined in recent successes and the characteristics above mentioned are conspicuously absent in the most pronounced failures. The New Drama has evolved as rapidly in this country as elsewhere and in the matter of simple, straightforward technic the Yankee genius leads! Eight years ago sixty per cent of the plays in America were foreign importations. Today the foreign product is scarcer than the native was then. Here is a practical evidence of progress! In another similar epoch the United States will be the foremost exponent of Theatrical Art in the World!

The increasing tendency is to reflect contemporary life. Managers want plays by American authors taking a firm hold on Modern American life! They may deal with life in the East or life in the West, in the heart of civilization or on its frontiers; social, commercial, domestic, political and even religious so long as the quality of the output is abreast with the progressive standards demanded by the strenuous public.

"For the most perfect production of Art in ALL its forms, the needful preparation is still—SCIENCE!"—Herbert Spencer.

THE COTTAGE IN THE AIR.

First New Play at the New Theatre.

It seems incredible to think that The New Theatre does not know a Play when it sees one? It seems still more difficult to believe that it would have selected "The Cottage in the Air" for its opening week had it realized that this piece is not

a Play. If we can show, therefore, that it is not a Play, we must take for granted that the "New" conception of Dramatic Composition is not altogether clear. For technical purposes we may define a play as A Completed Action having a beginning, a middle and an end. Can this definition be applied to "A Cottage in the Air?"

Let us see what constitutes its Theme: The folly of indiscriminate almsgiving. How is this theme carried into Plot? A young princess chooses a life devoted to charity in preference to a royal union. She finds her indiscriminate almsgiving a harmful influence and finally consents to marry the prince. This is a tale of adventure, but not a completed action. Action implies doubt, Drama is Conflict always. There should be a clash of interests and an obstacle to be overcome, but here we have a tranquil little tale of fairyland as languid as a lullaby. There is no doubt. There is no conflict. There is nothing at issue. None of the dramatic elements of anxiety, suspense, curiosity or sympathy are dramatically employed in its development. The "Comedy" was adapted from a fairy tale and remains nothing but a simple fable for want of proper technical treatment. There is plenty of material in it for a Play, but it is not moulded into a sustained action! The presentation of a young girl's adventures, even though she be a runaway princess, does not constitute action. "The Cottage in the Air" is a most excellent example of what Drama is not. If "The New Theatre" knows exactly what a Play is, it has found out since selecting this first bill, for surely no evidence of that knowledge is manifest in the virgin effort.

T H E C O M M A N D I N G O F F I C E R .

Does the Play Reader Know?

The important question about this play written by a man who has acted as Play reader for Charles Frohman for the last eleven years is: Does Burt Sayre really know how bad his Play is? Would he allow it to be staged if he did? These are the points that concern the many American playwrights who forward their manuscripts to managers for approval.

"The Commanding Officer" violates every law of Drama that the science of Playwriting has thus far formulated! It is a child's conception of what a Play should be dealing with a monstrous subject which the play gives no excuse for ventilating. It is the oldest of the "old school" melodrama written by a man who is supposed to judge modern dramatic material. Some years ago Thomas wrote a play on this order called "Arizona," but he has long since graduated from that obsolete standard!

There are so many useless characters employed in this play that it may be likened to the Three-ring circus with the usual supplement of side shows. And while Mr. Sayre is said to enjoy the distinction of never having abstracted ideas from the plays presented to him for reading it is at least evident that this crude document is nothing more than a conglomerate compilation of little "stunts" assembled from somewhere. The author's process is plainly discernible. He wishes to write a Play—he refers to his scrapbook of situations—here he finds a clever device for procuring indelible evidence by means of a camera. "All right," says Mr. Sayre, "we will take a snap shot of a wife kissing the villain No. 1," and he begins to construct his Plot around this inspiring incident. On page "23" of the said scrap book he also finds a memorandum that a shadow cast upon a window curtain is a rare bit of compromising testimony, and in consequence he inserts the episode of the shadow of a "Man in the room" which turns out to be only a woman in male attire. The trick compromises the character of his heroine and away he goes writing all around this little scandal splitting his Plot into half a dozen shreds of disunity. The continual run of such digression soon establishes the fact that his play is a collection of "thrillers" drawn from the reader's notebook and that his melodrama is merely a net work strung around these incidents as compared with a legitimate play BUILT upon a theme by a process of creative imagination.

We have referred to villain No. 1 because like the double Topsy's and Eva's in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," this new melodrama has pairs of everything—villains, lovers, sweethearts, leading men and leading women. "Stilly" music is also a factor in painting the dime novel atmosphere that pervades this piece.

Strange as it may seem, however, there are good spots in this crude specimen of "workmanship," and stranger still is the fact that these commendable scenes have only resulted when Mr. Sayre evidently quit his scrap book for a moment and put his own pen to the paper. Act II has a very respectable bit of dramatic composition in the way of a cross-examination of an innocent girl who finds difficulty in defending her innocence without exposing the dishonor of her dearest friend. The Scene is a good one.

There are possibilities in this material for a good Play which a dramatist with a clear vision of Unity could clarify and reduce to a simple, compact play. But judging from this specimen of Mr. Sayre's work, it is safe to say that he will never in a thousand years write a Play in the modern acceptance of that term, unless he wakens to the fact that an entirely

new type of Drama has evolved—a scientific Drama which requires systematic structure and until he studies this Drama and masters its principles (all of which we have said are transgressed in "The Commanding Officer") he will not even know how to efficiently perform the functions of his office as reader of plays for the most prominent manager in America.

SEVEN DAYS AND THE WOMAN PAYS.

The Advantage of Collaboration.

That a writer with some notion of stage requirements may fail utterly in his own attempt and yet make good in collaboration with another is clearly illustrated in the joint effort of Avery Hopwood and Mrs. Rinehart: "Seven Days" which is a tremendous success following Hopwood's dramatic disaster "The Woman Pays."

In "The Woman Pays" Hopwood attempted a morbid problem play which is conspicuous for its absence of technical problem and which manifests little skill in any feature of its creation save a fair notion of stage requirements. But in collaboration with Mrs. Rinehart who furnished the humorous material highly susceptible of dramatization he succeeded in bringing out a Play of the lighter vein which threatens to rival "Charley's Aunt" in a record breaking run on Broadway.

Nothing could testify more profoundly to the demand for consistent Cause and Effect even in a farce than the success of this play. It is highly improbable in many details but the great big Cause that binds the complete action into one whole is logical and rational. The house is quarantined for smallpox and hence the reason for keeping this jolly bunch of fun makers in continued relations of merriment for the seven days.

"The Woman Pays" is a much feebler argument logically. A woman forces her betrayer to marry her at the point of a pistol. She rears the child in solitude but because of its appeal to both of them the man and wife are reunited. The Cause for this reunion is not convincing. It could doubtless be wrought into the play if the characters and conditions were modified to make such an issue plausible but the play as it stands fails for want of rational Cause. Of course the Theme to start with is morbid and unsympathetic.

These two plays are cited as an instance of collaborative success following individual failure. It is frequently advisable for an author to join efforts with one of an entirely different point of view. Readers of "The Dramatist" who would like to enter into arrangement to collaborate with other authors are invited to forward their manuscript to the editor who after reading same will suggest, if possible some name with whom

the applicant may correspond. Two heads are ofttimes better than one!

ISRAEL.

By the French Builder of Gigantic Scenes.

Bernstein's new play "Israel" is a startling example of the French structural method of building backward from a huge situation. This play conforms so closely to that plan of procedure that the one Big Scene virtually constitutes the play despite all backward or forward attempt at construction.

It might be said in a strictly technical sense that the play does not begin in the first act nor end in the last act. We listen to a great deal of talk in Act I about Thibault's hatred for the Jews, and see him challenge a prominent Hebrew gentleman to a duel. We see no purpose in the duel, and it is for this reason that the first act does not begin the play. The conditions of the actions are not shared with the audience. We have nothing to arouse our emotions to any dramatic degree because we are not given the facts which should arouse them. The author could have done this had he imparted to his audience (not necessarily to the characters in the play) some subtle inference that Thibault is challenging his own father to mortal combat. We would then have something for our emotions to feed upon—fear, hope, sympathy, and solicitude, all would spring from such an inference, but in absolute ignorance of the premises of the play how can we be expected to "Take Notice" of the first, or anticipate anything for the second act.

The same author has accomplished this feat most dexterously in "The Thief," where he allows the boy to be charged with the theft but gives the audience two clues to the contrary: the fact that the young wife is inconsistently extravagant and that the boy has strong reason for concealing his errand in the room where the thefts had been committed.

On the other hand the Third or last act of "Israel" does not conclude the action that really gets a going in the magnificent second act for the reason that it deals with a love affair between Thibault and a girl who drops from the clouds, instead of bringing the race prejudice problem to a solution. The author skilfully illustrates that a Jew, under the pressure of Gentle environment and misconception as to his own blood can be taught to despise the Jews just as religiously as any misguided Christian, but here the magnitude of the play is thrown to the winds. The denouement is ignored and the opportunity of making an exalted triumph for the transcending personality created in the character of Thibault's father, is cast asunder. The father appeals to his natural son in vain. Thibault calmly replies "I hate you," and the insipid, manufactured mush above

mentioned is allowed to end the play—a love scene truckling to the traditional demand for a "Happy-ever-afterward."

But we can well afford to forget all this distorted structure (and it is rumored that the conventional happy ending is an American amendment) while witnessing the Second act, for here we have the acme of technical perfection. The act is practically one extended scene between mother and son, in which the boy wrings the awful intelligence (which now dawns dramatically upon the audience and would carry fully as well if the first act were entirely omitted) that the man whom Thibault is about to fight, once cared for her; then, that she cared for this man; that the affection was entirely pure and innocent; and finally after a harrowing cross-examination, that she had sinned and that this Hebrew is Thibault's own father. The master stroke in this scene is the skilfull treatment which enables every atom of evidence to be confined to the tense dialog between these two people—mother and son.

The marriage certificate, the wedding ring, the witnesses, and all the thousand hum-drum devices familiar in commonplace Drama are dispensed with. The Dramatist places these two characters before us and out of the strongest exigency of circumstances and relations between them, builds this powerful situation of plain, pungent Drama. As a scene it has few rivals in recent playwriting, the nearest approach being the second act of "The Thief" by the same author, which is treated under separate heading in this issue.

Y O U R H U M B L E S E R V A N T .

Excellent Example of Amateur Infirmities.

Picture two writers helplessly drifting in a current of clever play ideas, unable to gain a foothold where they might determine which to select and which to reject; and you have an adequate conception of the whirlpool of conflicting thoughts that submerged Newton Booth Tarkington and Harry Leon Wilson in their futile efforts to make a consistent Play of "Your Humble Servant."

It is the purpose of the following analysis to show conclusively that a certain circumscribed area of material contains the possible structure for ONE Play and that any departure from that inherent course of development after the boundaries are once laid out, merely invites disunity and confusion. It is not always easy to ascertain this native structure from the author's staged production for his intended idea is often obscured by hazy technic. In "Your Humble Servant" it is necessary to search diligently for the dramatic germ which the authors attempted to exploit but it is about as follows:

An actor discovers that he loves his ward upon her announcement that she is infatuated with a younger member of their company. Financial distress confronts them disillusioning the boy but stimulating the man who attains success as well as the love of his ward.

This is the legitimate play idea intimated in the chaos of distracted stuff which the authors have endeavored to merge into one drama. It is the view of their material which a superior altitude would have afforded them—a height they must climb before being able to survey the prospect and determine what legitimately constitutes their own play-territory.

According to the synopsis above, the fundamental condition is that the guardian discovers his love for his ward when he learns that she loves the younger fellow. This element should be introduced as soon as possible for it is one of the cardinal points upon which the action rests. Where do we first encounter it in the play? At the end of the Third Act! To be sure there is some intimation of the situation shown in the first act by the guardian's behavior when the girl tells him of her love for the lad, but a basic factor in the primal structure of a play cannot be left to guesswork or the symptoms of love-lorn sighs. These bulwarks of construction must be built with strong lines of permanence and the only effective method of doing this is by means of Scenes! Some such scene does occur at the end of the third act but not being the outgrowth of what precedes it is little more than a one act play in itself. This scene should precede the entire action of the play for if we do not know beyond the shadow of a doubt that this man loves his ward what foundation is there for the play to rest upon? What basis is there to stimulate that hope—hope—hope—that the "worthy one will win her." Instead of confining doubt to this issue the play casts a doubt upon the love of the guardian which our summary shows to be one of the foremost essentials of demonstration.

Instead of fixing the premises firmly in the minds of their audience the authors start off the play with a diverting piece of episode. The sheriff, who rightfully belongs in the first act to convey the impending financial disaster, is made to do a little amateur theatrical stunt; not because it in any way advances the Plot but simply for the reason that the vaudeville stage in ages past has endorsed the stunt as "funny." It is funny just as a thousand other tricks might be. But there is no place in a real Play for the most humorous thing in the world unless it contributes in some perceptible degree to the progress of Plot or the Action. Of course this rule does not apply to farce or the fantastic Play.

The next impression given us in the first act of this play is that the Plot will concern a young man's choice between home

and a stage sweetheart. In a special scene the boy's father is introduced. He appeals to his runaway son to renounce this life of folly for a home of luxury and a career in the financial world. Haven't we every right to presume from this emphasized condition that the play will involve a struggle between these two contending forces? But this predicted struggle is no material factor in the play!

In the summary above you will note that the true cause for the boy's desertion of the girl is the financial distress that confronts them. The father's protest is brought in as an additional motive and results in diluting the main cause. The fact that the authors wish to establish is that the boy's love is not equal to the test! He is out of the running! The mature love of the actor is of superior quality. The father's opposition to the stage and the fine home that awaits the boy might be incidental factors in the action but they are not facts that warrant whole Scenes to pronounce them! Particularly if such Scenes subordinate the Plot essentials. If is in this regard that the authors need more perspective in their play plans!

All of the second act is given over to proving two things. That the boy is pigeon-hearted and surrenders—that the man is eternally optimistic and strikes luck. But here again Unity is impaired, for the luck that he strikes is a precarious horse race—not the legitimate success that is in keeping with what has gone before. This resort to irrelevant chance is the flimsiest subterfuge. The success consistent with the Plot is stage success! If the second act ended with the young cub's capitulation coincident with a gleam of triumph for the guardian, the third and fourth acts might easily be merged into one epoch of the action setting forth the triumph. As it is, these two acts ramble aimlessly about taking artistic success as a matter of course instead of attaining it out of the natural development of the play. All sorts of mock martyrdom artificially defer the conclusion of the love story and the fourth act is only made possible by the mechanical stage hysterics of the girl in act III, who, after warmly declaring her love for the guardian frantically asserts she didn't mean it! This is the author's contrivance irrespective of the nature of their plot.

Besides these principal violations of technic there is the spurious episode of the juggler who is supposed to have aroused the jealousy of the young lover (This promises an entirely new play)—the guardian's drink contest with the society sot, which prompts us to expect some complication arising from this debauch; and the Yiddish stageman who works overtime to give us an accurate account of the vicissitudes of his profession: all of which encumber the legitimate progress of the Plot without bearing essential relation to any minor detail of Plot action.

"Your Humble Servant" is the strongest argument for complete plans and specifications in the project of Play building! If the novice does not know what constitutes the framework of a house how can he construct one? He is very apt to fall into the error of the authors of this piece building more rooms than the walls will contain or the roof shelter!

THE FORTUNE HUNTER.

Another Example of the New Type.

"The Fortune Hunter" takes first place in the 1909 edition of productions for two reasons. It is the new type of simple story and construction and it is an IDEA Play ventilating a vital problem of social welfare. The moral of the Play is: Don't marry a rich "lady," for you may some day be able to support yourself and the woman you love!

Let us reduce the Play to a synopsis and survey the result. A young man seeks a rich man's daughter but declines the match upon discovering his business ability to provide for the girl he really loves. It is a very wholesome little story and Mr. Winchell Smith has handled it with rare skill and humor. He can study with profit, however, the superior technic of Eugene Walter in "the Easiest Way" and "Paid in Full." Particularly is this advisable in the denouement of his play. The solution is not obtained from a logical manipulation of the material but is patched up out of foreign threads of irrelevant fabric.

The closing situation is as follows. The young man has attained the fullest measure of success in his undertaking. The heiress has proposed marriage. But alas! He now finds himself capable of earning money and to cap the climax he really loves a bewitching little lass! The question that now confronts the playwright is: How can he shake the heiress? Mr. Smith loses courage. He does not see a legitimate way to accomplish this feat so he trumps up a second story of rumored embezzlement, permits this rumor to repel the moneyed maiden and bluntly tosses his hero into the arms of his heroine.

But this is not playwriting! The Play is still unfinished. The ending affixed is not a conclusion dramatically drawn from the proposition he started with. The materials are all there to work with but the builder has laid them down just at a moment when the completed structure was promised. Deserting his firm foundation he selects another building site, sticks a few straws in the sand and says: "My building is finished!" The true solution of this Play is in the plot itself. The young man's discovery of self-sufficiency is the real cause that dispels the feminine financial fancy and not the haphazard device of a false rumor of embezzlement. Such clap-trap contrivance puts a farce-comedy end to a Play that is otherwise original and funny.

There is a third story lightly sketched in this play which serves more as an obstacle to the progress of the main plot than any other purpose. It retards the beginning of the play and clogs the essential action which we are only too eager to see. We refer to the water-gas invention. Considerable talk is necessary in the first act to prepare for this impediment and it comes to nothing of plot value. The Theme purpose of the author is to show that his young hero has in him the qualities that win success which faculty only the exigency of circumstances could arouse. Instead of that he divides the issue and decides to "ring in" a cheap, irrelevant episode of speculation to achieve the young man's success. His ability had already been illustrated. The get-rich-quick element only dilutes the force of the principal story and impairs the Problem which calls for that moderate degree of success financially which would naturally accrue from the honest efforts of newly attuned personality in developing a business enterprise. The author should choose one course of action and cling to it. By all odds the regular commercial method of legitimate trade is preferable. It enforces the character of our hero. To prevent a sacrifice sale of an old man's invention is a fortuitous expedient and to become rich through a clever sale of this patent, (which does not take place before the audience) is not dramatic method, it is story.

THE HARVEST MOON.

Intellect Against Art.

In his new play "The Harvest Moon" Augustus Thomas boldly defies the fundamental principles of play construction. The play deals with a metaphysical theory that is fast becoming science but while it is an evidence of intellect it is a lapse of art. The result is a preaching—not a Play. This may be due to deliberate intention in the belief that he, the author, is bigger than his art, or it may come through utter surrender to an absorbing theme.

The death of Clyde Fitch leaves Thomas his lenial successor as the leading exponent of American drama, but the latter certainly inherits no liberal legacy of Fitch's mastery of technic. Thomas is a capable scene builder. He has created one scene in the second act of his new play which is supreme in itself, but the great gaps in Plot structure all about it naturally detract from its potency and render the absence of technic painfully apparent. He expects to arouse our sympathy concerning a young girl's ill-treatment, but from the very outset neglects to share with his audience the information that is expected to generate these emotions. In dissecting the first act we see the author's intention to lead us to hope that a certain French visitor will turn out to be the girl's father. This

parental relation is one of the vital conditions upon which he builds his play as well as the basis of authority for this man's meddling with the domestic affairs of the girl's family. The only clue we have to the blood relation between these two people is the information that the girl's mother had some love affair in France and the Frenchman's observation: "She is very like her mother—but not like me." We see that the author is endeavoring to make us suspect some such outcome, but this factor of kinship being one of the cardinal essentials of Plot should not be left to any such precarious guess-work so far as the audience is concerned. It is not necessary that the characters in the play be given this bit of information until the proper time, but the audience should know or at least surmise it from the very first. The province of the playwright is to lead his audience to think in a certain direction, not to baffle or bewilder them. It is in this respect that Mr. Thomas has defied an immutable law of his art, transposing drama into mere fiction simply for want of conditions properly laid to generate and sustain Dramatic Action.

The Harvest Moon is made to shine upon a separate Plot of irrelevant romance concerning a dissolute old judge and a widow of startling sophistication. This sub-plot is in no way joined to the main story. It is a little vaudeville skit grafted on to the main Plot to meet the traditional notion that Drama is a blending of "Laughs and Tears!" Such episode should be exceedingly strong to warrant an interruption of a Play, and it must be said that technically this specimen is far below the standard Mr. Thomas has set, both in scene construction and character study.

In the absence of any evidence that this Frenchman is the girl's father the play makes a desperate effort to put an end to itself at the close of Act III where she and her lover are re-united by the light of the Harvest Moon. The fourth act which attempts to separate them again, is a gross transgression upon the Unity of the principal theme, for we are now witnessing a melodrama concerning the illegitimate birth of our heroine which complication is dissolved only by the trumped-up testimony of the Frenchman whose evidence is so devoid of conviction as to reveal the author's pen sticking through the thin fabric of invention. If such a Play were offered by any writer other than a man of Mr. Thomas' prestige the advice would be: "Go study technic! Take Eugene Walter for a model!"

THE MELTING POT.

Mr. Zangwill Evades the Issue.

The gist of the Melting Pot is as follows:

A girl of the Russian aristocracy falls in love with a Jewish musician whose family her father has massacred. The Russian aristocrat relinquishes his Life Prejudice. He and the Jew are fully reconciled. The daughter marries him.

Purged of all detail these are the essentials of Zangwill's new Play. In every good Play the essentials are invariably proven. Do we find that the case here?

The young Russian girl is fascinated with the Hebrew's musical skill but her love for the man is far from being firmly established. There is no reasonable basis for love between these radically opposed types. The author requires this condition in his premises and practically assumes the fact. The young people have a little quarrel and then: "Nothing shall separate us!"

But if we accept the author's proposition that the most violent class hatred in the world may be overcome by a little music and love, we are still face to face with the opposition of the Russian father, who is bitterly opposed to the match to say nothing of the Jew's attitude toward an enemy who had massacred the members of his own family! Here we have two firm wills in violent conflict. There may be some subtle agency in the realm of Dramatic invention that could reconcile two such enemies but Mr. Zangwill has not shown it to us. He merely evades the issue! By the aid of a little eloquent preaching the author gives us to believe that the battle is over and that the Jew wins. For after listening to a sermon condemning his bloody deeds the Russian calmly surrenders. The weapon he was about to use on his young adversary he now offers in abject resignation, saying: "You're right—shoot me!"

Despite the fact that ex-president Roosevelt and "Collier's Weekly" commend this play for its lofty motif it cannot be called good Drama for it is not convincing. The dramatist like the jurist must firmly establish every link in his chain of evidence. When he fails to do so he reveals the naked hand of an author writing his personal views into the play instead of causing them to be brought out through the clashing interests of his characters.

Very much after the fashion of "The Harvest Moon," "The Melting Pot" contains a spurious fourth act which is almost wholly foreign to the Play itself, containing none of the essentials in the syllogism above outlined.

What does the fourth act accomplish? The third act ends with the reconciliation of enemies. The daughter could easily find herself in the arms of her sweetheart, now. But no, Mr. Zangwill wishes further opportunity to shout his theories

from the housetops. He places his hero on the roof garden of a city building—to preach to us—for the character has nothing more to say in his relation to the other characters. The author is so intent on this sermonizing that he soon forgets to take in a valuable violin out of the rain. The play has long since stopped, but we are asked to listen to a manufactured quarrel between the lovers, long-drawn-out, and not until his eloquence is exhausted does Mr. Zangwill allow us to go home.

The motive involved is highly commendable. Our purpose, however, is technical discussion and study—and the secret of the play's success is its appeal to the Jewish element. If it were not for his own tribe Mr. Zangwill would soon exhaust his audience.

PAID IN FULL AND THE THIEF.

Comparing Technical Attributes.

These two plays have been praised by nearly every critic in the country and have received the stamp of approval of millions of people. On that basis we will call them the two best modern plays extant. There may be better types of drama but they have either not been pronounced good or they have not had the final test of time. It is the duty of the aspiring dramatist to study such specimens very closely not alone from a financial outlook but from the standpoint that only as a play succeeds is the dramatist successful for his object is to reach the greatest number of people with the message he has to convey. We will therefore inquire into the Dramatic elements that evidently give these plays their distinction and determine their success.

Each play tells a simple, straightforward story embodying a single and simple Theme. That of "Paid in Full" is: "The reward of selfishness." That of "The Thief" is: "Theft for Love."

Our next step of analysis is the reduction of each play to its least common denominator or its briefest possible syllogism. We will quote the following proposition done by one of the students of the Institute of the Drama.

PAID IN FULL.

Conditions.

A Clerk steals money from his employer who loves his wife.

Cause.

The clerk compels his wife to make "any terms" for his escape from imprisonment.

Conclusion.

She accomplishes her husband's release without losing her honor.

THE THIEF.

Conditions.

A woman steals money from a friend to hold her husband's admiration.

Cause.

She induces a boy who is madly in love with her to assume the theft.

Conclusion.

Her husband repudiates her when he learns the truth.

Of course these Plays contain many twists and turns not indicated in these brief summaries but the above problems contain the essential germ that is the seed from which the Play grows. All further details belong to Plot development.

Like the postage stamp they stick to one thing until they get there. The action is not clogged with secondary story or biplot. The author signifies his purpose and sets about at once to accomplish it. The method in each case is much the same. No time is wasted on the antiquated theory that there must be an "exposition" of all the characters in the Play. From the very outset the conditions out of which the action is to grow are planted firmly with the audience. The characters take care of themselves as they always will where Theme and Proposition are adhered to. Now do not gain a misconception of our meaning. Neither Bernstein nor Walter may have followed any set chart like the foregoing but the Theme was a guiding star, nevertheless, and the flaws that do crop out in their Plays result from a departure from Theme and Proposition.

In "Paid in Full" the wife is shown to be a stoic amidst the faultfinding relatives who remind her constantly of the husband's poverty. We also get a glimpse of the husband's selfishness and of the bachelor employer's partiality for the wife and his appreciation of her merits. We are prepared for the husband's salacious proposal that his wife barter her chastity for his freedom but we are also given reason to expect her strength sufficient to resist and conquer even such a monster as the employer is seen to be. The author does not tell us how he will solve the problem but he skillfully leads us to hope—hope—hope—for the issue he finally arrives at.

In "The Thief" we learn of the unwarranted extravagance of this young wife so madly in love with her own husband—a man of modest income. Then we see that the young man of

the house is sorely smitten with her. But there is no suggestion of impurity. The news of the theft in the house is given out and under rather suspicious circumstances the boy is made to confess the crime. But we are only half convinced. The author has imparted a subtle hint to us that this boy has a reason for confessing rather than expose certain things that would reveal his secret love for the young wife and by this means we are allowed to divine the error awaiting developments in breathless suspense. We do not suspect the wife at first because of the infallible evidence apparently convicting the boy, but when the proper time comes we connect the extravagance with the dawning proof against her and our sympathy is only intensified for this little soul who has transgressed man's law in her desperation to exchange even earthly things for a fuller portion of her husband's love. This is not a lax lesson? It is merely a tribute to the old maxim that "Love is blind."

The climax in each play is a struggle between man and woman. The one between a pure woman and her would-be seducer. The other between a pure woman and her own husband. In each conflict only two people are concerned and each constitutes one big scene which is the making of the Play. The Thief has one advantage over its contemporary in the matter of physical form. It is put forth in three acts. This is the ideal division for a Play! The first conveys the Conditions, the second, the Cause and the third the Conclusion. "Paid in Full" is susceptible of this ideal arrangement but a fourth Act has been attached which accomplishes nothing that could not have been settled in the third. In fact the wife's denunciation of her selfish husband could have been many times intensified if backed up by the old employer's presence and his overwhelming evidence of her heroic strength and honor! Think what a scathing reckoning the young imp would receive at the hands of a monster she had virtually sanctified! Jimsie's love theme is a slight tendency to Disunity of the main Theme but the episode is so well handled it makes its own apology. It may be seen in the above outline of the Play that no such issue is a part of the Proposition. It is a side story spliced on to achieve the "happy ending" but so cleverly interwoven with the main fabric as to retard action the least bit possible.

A like criticism may be made of the husband's jealousy in Bernstein's Play. The complication is startling and the temptation for the author to incorporate it in his play is overpowering but it is nevertheless Disunity for it bears little or no direct relation to the Proposition of the real Play and hinders the progress of the main Theme demanding a solution apart from the denouement of "The Thief." In the chaos that results the author fails to allay the jealousy he has aroused in the husband

and the Play is allowed to end in a very pretty but a very tame and undramatic talk condoning the wife's actions. This is true of all the Plays written by this young Frenchman. He is a winner at the climax but a "dead one" when the battle is once past. And what accounts for this sluggish denouement? It is the Disunity created by the jealousy motive. The moment the wife makes public confession of her guilt the Play is at an end and the proposition solved for the husband's love is restored and any foreign element interposed to defer this proper end vexes us unawares and generates the sighs and yawns that greet the labored efforts that precede the final curtain. The flaw no doubt arises in transposing and transplanting the Play from France to America. Slight modifications are the usual thing and a good Play cannot be tampered with even in the tiniest parts. In France the evidence of a wife's love might not be fortified by the fact that she committed theft only that she might appear the lovelier in her husband's eyes. The American ideal is a trifle loftier. And any attempt to make a husband suspect such a wife of a monstrous sin debases both the man and the Play. The flaw is just as truly technical for it is a direct violation of both Proposition and Theme. The summary does not call for a jealous motive and the Theme is love, not jealousy.

The purpose of analysing these two Plays is to illustrate the supremacy of ART in even the most popular form of Drama. In other words these Plays please because they approach perfection in craftsmanship and not because they involve sensational subject matter. They mark a very noticeable trend in the evolution of Drama toward Unity and simplification of Plot. It is a stride forward in perfect keeping with the tremendous progress of this scientific age! It is the only sort of Play that will fit the age! It is standard!

THE RETURN OF EVE.

A Fantasy Because it is Not Drama.

As an evidence that this is the AGE of the NEW AUTHOR no better proof can be advanced than the fact that such products as "The Return of Eve" by Lee Wilson Dodd, are able to obtain a metropolitan hearing. The program styled it "A modern fantasy in four acts," but we shall treat of it as a Play, there being no musical accompaniment to admit it to the realm of opera.

There are some good spots in the Eve character—a woman reared in total ignorance of the conventions of the inhabited world—but she is not framed in a dramatic picture; merely sketched off with very little heed to theatrical requirements. Instead of allowing conditions to unfold themselves in the

inevitable dramatic way, the author elects an orator in the person of "Old Winters" to talk the premises of his Play into the audience. There is little or no compulsive origin in this talk. It happens simply because the author so ordained it. The one thing that should be less conspicuous in a Play than any other is the AUTHOR! Or the author's purpose! The moment his will dominates the spontaneity of the speech of the characters that moment the dramatic illusion is threatened!

What there is of coherent Plot in this piece is highly mechanical. This is the apparent reason for naming it a "fantasy." It is too fantastic or artificial to come under the title of Play. But even a Phantasy in this day and age must possess some logical cohesion if it is to exist upon its capacity to hold and entertain an audience. Mere stage pictures and smart epigram are no provocation for a fee of admittance.

For want of consistent Plot the author finds difficulty in dividing his Play into Act units. The material is not sufficiently shaped to allow any such decision. An attempt is made in Act III to work up to a big Scene on the supposition that here is where the climax begins. But the emotional exhibition hangs in mid air. It is no climax for it has no foundation to rest upon. It is situation for situation sake! The Play has no central story that leads up to climax. Some effort is devoted to creating a struggle between Adam and a worldly suitor for the hand and heart of Eve, but Adam drops completely out of the contest after a first hint at the contention and no continued purpose is seen. In Act III the Plot becomes an intrigue to swindle Eve out of her legacy. At no point in the Play are the lines of battle openly drawn. Attention is concentrated on character contrast and catchy epigram. There is no tendency toward a completed action or a concluded argument with a Beginning, a Middle and an End.

As is so often the case in crude Drama the fourth Act is spurious, being nothing more than an unnecessary "stretching out of the agony." Three Acts are as a rule sufficient and the third and fourth in this Play should have been merged into one. There is no rational reason for keeping Adam and Eve apart. There is a fake misunderstanding sustained on the stage but not in the minds of the audience. Drama is definite! If there is an obstacle it must be clearly apparent! The spectator loves to submit to such an illusion when the obstacle is genuine, but when he sees that it is merely a device of the author's—action is killed outright! And it should require a pretty substantial reason to keep two unconventional lovers apart!

We call attention to the favorable attitude of managers toward untried Plays to remind you of the fact that this is the AGE of the NEW AUTHOR! His opportunity is Ripe! A

demand has been created for the Native product and producers are willing to risk their capital to secure such financial prizes as "Paid in Full" and "The Climax." These Plays, however, were not the virgin efforts of gifted men. They represent the final victory of a long lonesome struggle with the subtle secrets of stagecraft! Numerous failures preceded them. Take courage, Mr. Dodd! In 1850 Ibsen manufactured documents just as undramatic as yours!

S U D E R M A N N ' S O N E - A C T P L A Y S .

Streaks of Light, The Last Visit, Margot and The Faraway Princess.

The one act play is a severe test of the author's skill, for if properly done it must accomplish the purpose of a full evening's Drama setting forth the Conditions of the action, the Cause and the Conclusion. It is really a Drama in miniature. It is a Gem. Sudermann, however, does not endorse this theory in this new group of one act plays recently translated into the English under the title of "Roses"*. In fact he does not make a great difference between Drama and Story except for the Dialogue. These specimens do not speak well for the progress of German Dramatic Composition if Sudermann is taken as a criterion and he is recognized in that country as one of the leading exponents of dramatic literature. They do not compare favorably with the best English or American standards and are behind the age in most of the technical attributes which characterize a brand new species in the evolution of Drama.

"Streaks of Light" approaches nearest the mark of modern craftsmanship. The Theme is a morbid one but the fundamental principles of Playwriting are not so flagrantly violated as in the other three. There is excellent Preparation on Page 13 in the mother's reference to the mysterious disappearance of the roses. We at once see the clue that will lead the husband to the hiding place of his runaway wife. On page 32 the author employs the obsolete method of allowing two persons to converse in the presence of a third character struck temporarily deaf. No author would do this who knew how to substitute real art for the subterfuge. It is a survival of that antiquated form which relied upon speech instead of the actor's art for interpreting the author's meaning. All of these asides and aparts belong to the actor's facial or pantomimic performance. They destroy the illusion, if uttered aloud under circumstances that would not be reasonably probable in actual life.

*Chas. Scribner's Sons, \$1.25 net.

"Margot" is a gem of character drawing in so far as the introduction of the persons of the playlet is concerned. On page 53 the intimation that the attorney himself loves the girl is conveyed in the subtlest manner. The Scene between her mother and the attorney abounds in the liveliest germs of action. But the Theme is perverted at the very climax of the skit and its possibilities are scattered to the four winds.

After the author's philosophy has exposed the shallowness of that social law which prescribes that a girl shall marry the man who has betrayed her even though he be a veritable beast and after he has created a wholesome self-reliant man broad enough to rescue this girl from the fate her own mother designs for her—he deliberately abandons this Theme transforming this purified girl into a depraved creature of base appetite. This is no part or product of the premises which concern the imperious caprice of a young and innocent girl. In this attempt to spring an irrelevant sequel the author descends from the dramatic to the most ordinary of illogical narrative. It is rank Disunity!

"The Last Visit" is another example of transgressed Unity with a surprise introduced at the end which in slight degree results from anything that has preceded. It cannot be too emphatically impressed upon the Dramatist that any extraneous climax not a healthful outgrowth of the primary conditions of the play is diametrically opposed to Dramatic Law! To merely dismay your audience is not to win their confidence!

In this little sketch an officer has been killed in a duel. A certain countess is supposed to be the cause of the quarrel. The countess calls to secure the love letters she had written the officer and snubs a young girl on the premises. This young girl turns out to be the officer's wife or widow as it were. Is this a Play? No! It is merely a page of weird fiction. The author sets out to fool us and succeeds. He apparently ignores the fact that the basis of dramatic action is the knowledge of preliminary conditions imparted to his audience.

The Play is conversational to a degree of being wordy. Little really happens before our eyes. It is all talked ABOUT. The greatest genius under the sun could not make a good Play after this process. There must be a predominant Cause in a Play and we must SEE that all things evolve around it. Things must happen. We lose interest when they are merely told us.

"The Far-Away Princess" like "The Last Visit" is mostly talk. The introduction comes to us from parties not vitally concerned in the action—the landlady and her waitress. The piece is devoid of a tangible proposition. Nothing is solved when it is over.

A young man cherishes the ideal of a princess whom he woos through a telescope. He meets a very ordinary looking girl who proves to be the princess and his ideal vanishes. This is the substance of the thesis of this sketch. It is far—far away from anything that would be defined as dramatic action. It would not arouse interest either in the reading or the acting. It is the result of affecting exalted purpose in play philosophy. But true drama can only be conveyed in the simple language of the soul and such attitude toward Art merely dilutes the effect strived for.

HOW HE LIED TO HER HUSBAND.

A Four-day Composition.

Compare the foregoing efforts with a technical masterpiece like Shaw's little four day composition "How He Lied to Her Husband." See what the skill of a trained dramatist can do with the most hackneyed of situations—Husband, Wife and Lover.

Action begins at the very rise of the curtain, even before a word is uttered, and continues through every moment of the Playlet. Study the structure and you will note that the pantomime of the actors interprets the author's meaning almost without words. This is the crucial test, after all! What story will your play tell to the deaf mute?

THE GODDESS OF REASON.

A Product of Penmanship.

Do not spend two dollars for the printed copy of this Play unless you desire to read a delusion in blank verse that has hypnotized the leading actress in America into believing that a collection of scattered phrases and pretty speeches constitute a Play. Julia Marlowe produced this piece probably for the reason that she saw opportunities for much talk. For it is practically talk—talk from cover to cover. There are few instances where the author has departed from the story telling method which made her "To Have and to Hold" famous. It is true the thing is done into Dialog but not in a dramatic sense and the descriptive method is carried on by means of the characters just the same. There is little or no play construction and Scene writing is a principle that has never dawned upon the novelist. Up to page sixteen, for instance, there is not the slightest glimpse of dramatic action. The author merely addresses the audience through the agency of her characters relating the conditions upon which the action of her composition is based. In a well made Play not a single word is uttered that is not compelled by the relations shown to exist

between the characters. This story meanders along with no ultimate purpose, taking first one course then another, much after the popular narrative method.

The history of individual characters, who bear no vital relation to Plot is given as much attention as an essential point and on the other hand many of the biggest moments are allowed to occur offstage or between Acts, reaching the audience only through second hand chatter. One such instance is Yvette's election to the office of "Goddess." How did she get there? Nothing that preceded gave us any reason to believe she was entitled to such honors. Another essential which should be seen but is merely heard of is Yvette's plea for De Vardes' pardon. Yvette merely tells DeVardes that she obtained his pardon.

There is a systematic way to go about building a Play. It is not by beginning with the Dialog as Miss Johnston has evidently done. The scenario must be built step by step, each successive Scene denoting material progress in the action. Miss Johnston sees a possible stage picture and she jots it down whether it concerns the Plot or not.

The fact that the piece reached production proves one thing: that even an actress of Miss Marlowe's intellect can be deceived readily by alluring opportunities of heroic declamation irrespective of the fact that these recitations are not substantial parts of that completed whole familiarly known as a Play. And this talented actress was highly enthusiastic at the time over the part she played thoroughly believing it good dramatic material.

Even actors, you see, would do well to learn the Art of Playwriting. It would enable them to KNOW a Play. And novelists should take up the subject with all the reverence of a printer's devil aspiring to journalism.

For study, read the knitting song on page 115 reposed in the din and slaughter of French revolution. Note on the same the undramatic way in which Nanon and Celeste talk into the audience the intervening history and election of Yvette as Goddess. On page 182 read the tiresome soliloquy and see if you can determine any possible use of it. Shakespeare used soliloquy we'll admit, but that doesn't retard the law of evolution in playwriting. Science is pointing out the truer way, dramatically. "The world do move" and Drama keeps apace with it! If you are in search of a modern Play, a pretty safe guide would be to follow the dramatic laws which in this Play Are Not! And at the top of your page of "Don'ts" place the taboo: "Blank Verse!" As far as Dramatic quality is concerned it is a snare and a delusion.

A N E N G L I S H M A N ' S H O M E.

Dramatizing National Defence.

This is the best example extant of Theme for Theme sake. The Play is simply swamped with Theme! An Army Propagandist takes advantage of the psychological moment to dramatize a public sentiment—a moment when England is all agog over possible invasion by Germany, and the result is success—for that moment!

Taking as his Theme the inadequacy of England's National defense to repel the attack of a formidable adversary, Major Du Maurier has done one of the best bits of atmosphere ever achieved on the stage. But it is not a Play! It is a charade! None of the characters employed in the stage pictures are engaged in that personal conflict which in itself is the very fibre of Drama.

The remarkable quality of his portrayed conditions may be seen on pages 15 and 16, where the old man is mastering the technic of Ping Pong Art to a microscopic degree of perfection; and on pages 12-15 where the young folks fix the impression that Football is life's paramount issue.

Out of these conditions an excellent Play could grow with the care and attention of a dramatic gardener. But the Major fails to bring his theory down to personal interests—it remains a National issue and a Play cannot take place on the ordinary stage with Nations constituting its cast of characters.

T H E F A I T H H E A L E R.

A Play Without an Impression.

No better example of the absurd, unreal and idiotic Drama can be found than this bit of artificial character study written by the author of "The Great Divide." What is he? That is about as definite as the question can frame itself concerning the principal person in the Play. This supposed human creature is so utterly intangible that it does not appeal to a mortal audience. We subscribe to the dramatist's invention only because it is based upon the real—all else in stage-land is relegated to the fantastic or fairy tale farce and opera.

The striking feature technically in this piece is that it is practically devoid of problem or proposition. It starts nowhere and ends in mid air. There is nothing at issue—a mere tale of a faith healer's adventure. The author strives for exalted Theme but aims so high that he shoots above his own head as well as ours. But Art is the law of gravity that brings his arrow down to earth! And science bumps his air ship with a stilly thud!

The most valuable lesson taught by "The Faith Healer" is, that the author avails nothing in mystifying his audience. His purpose should be as clear and straightforward as consistent logic can make it. To bewilder his spectators as Mr. Moody proceeds to do in the third Act by introducing fragments of the past career of his heroine, Rhoda, is the wildest of crude Disunity! He leads us to anticipate all sorts of entanglements regarding her thin-skinned love affair with the "healer" by flinging in little inferences that the Doctor had had an affair with her of some unclean description.

We feel in a very vague sort of way that some sensational exposure is the author's intended climax but the whole effort at playwriting is so ineffectual that no enduring impression of any nature is made. In fact the nearest approach to a theme is "Unstable equilibrium." The author perhaps wishes to indicate that faith healing is merely a fictitious name for positive mental suggestion but his method is too faltering to carry any conviction with it. The moral for young dramatists is: "Go thou and do otherwise!"

COMPETITION.

...DO NOT PREACH! THE PUBLIC CAN SECURE
FREE SEATS IN A CHURCH!

Manager Savage's Advice to Tyros.

The DRAMATIST

LUTHER B. ANTHONY, Editor

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APRIL

CHAIR OF DRAMATIC WRITING.

Need of Real Plays.

A very prominent New York Theatrical manager would be one of ten to contribute \$25,000 each to establish a chair of dramatic writing in an American University. He is very much in earnest on this subject and does not believe that any Playwright ever made a real, genuine success until he first had learned the rudiments of his art.

He doesn't believe in the heaven-born brand of playwright—the man who comes down to the office in the morning with one finger on his brow in a high-art pose and dictates a Play before he goes to lunch. He believes playwriting is as serious a profession today as any other of the so-called learned ones, and that before a man ventures to practice it he ought at least to know what he wants to do and how it ought to be done.

"We have 3500 theatres in this country," said he, "not to speak of one-night stands. We have more actors than can find work. We have plenty of managers, an excellent machinery for the production of Plays, all the money that is needed—far more money than can be utilized—a vast organization ready. The one thing that is needed, and that we can't get is real Plays. Every day managers produce Plays with which they privately find fault, or of the success of which they are in doubt. They are forced to it by the dearth of good material. Think of it; the really successful American dramatists can be counted almost on the fingers of one hand. It isn't because of any lack of the raw material of which dramatists are made, but because that raw material isn't properly trained. Before the budding dramatist learns his trade he is apt to starve to death."

Plenty of Reward Waits.

And he is ready with proof that the successful playwright can depend on financial rewards which few of the other professions offer their votaries. He mentioned one American author as an example. If not a leading author, he is at least the most voluminous American writer. He turns out fiction and humor and pathos, and the other set pieces, as fast as any other writer in the world. It is rare, indeed, that some one

of his stories is not running in one of the periodicals which make a feature of fiction, and his personal clientele is, perhaps, larger than that of any other American writer.

"That man got for his latest story \$31,000. Mr. James Forbes has already drawn \$60,000 in royalties from his play 'The Traveling Salesman.' He has received more than \$100,000 for 'The Chorus Lady.' Charles Klein has drawn several hundreds of thousands of dollars in royalties from his various productions. The list might be extended indefinitely. A successful play means more to the author than ten years of successful practice in one of the other professions in many instances."

"I read everything that is submitted to me. When a play comes in I number it, and take it up in turn in my moments of leisure. But—I receive from 1500 to 1600 plays a year. Many of them may be dismissed with hardly a glance, because the writer has very obviously broken every rule of dramatic construction. Others need careful study. I give them that study, because I believe in the American dramatist. I have made money in producing American plays by American playwrights. In all my life I have produced only two English plays. They were this season's crop—one 'The Earth,' and the other 'The Noble Spaniard.' Both were failures. I was driven to them because I could not find a play by an American that promised success. Yet in a large percentage of the plays offered to me—in the rough, so to speak—I find good ideas."

Good Ideas Poorly Handled.

"The writers have happened upon a great theme. They have a good situation. They have a strong central idea. But they have not worked it out in such form that it could be produced on the stage. Many of them would make excellent novels, I am persuaded. They have every element that enters into a good seller between green covers; but they are not handled in that particular way that is demanded of the drama—and until they are I cannot touch them. But I have faith in some of these writers. There are, perhaps, a dozen young fellows whom I have 'grubstaked,' as they say in the West. I have furnished them with enough money to go on with while they try to hammer their stories into dramatic form. I may lose money on them all. I may find one great play in the bunch—and come out a winner in the end."

Nor does this manager believe that a dramatic author may hammer out a play while he waits.

"Too many people quote the example of Dion Boucicault," said he "who wrote 'London Assurance' in twenty-four hours. The best authors take the longest time. Fitch's plays would

have been bettered if he had worked them over. Pinero is leisurely in his treatment. He lets the idea for a new play mull in his mind before he touches it. Thomas and Klein never attempt to turn out more than one play a year. There are 20,000 plays written in this country every year—and perhaps 2 per cent. of them are really successful. There should be fewer plays written—and more good ones."

"What good, he asks, "is the endowment of a theatre if no good Plays can be furnished it? Better endow a means by which the country, that wants new plays—is crying for them—can get them.

J U S T A W I F E .

Walter's High Water Mark.

Again the laurel wreath must be awarded Mr. Eugene Walter who has surpassed all other American Dramatists and out-classed his own prior efforts in this latest drama "Just a Wife."

An author matures only as he rises above the hidebound convention of the society he lives in, to a position where he can observe the human condition that lurks beneath the veneer of form and custom.

The Dramatist matures only as he rises above traditional thetic situation and builds about the bigger, deeper basis of Theme.

On both these counts Mr. Walter has made good in "Just a Wife" and his play which received the censure of critics of the immature class has been approved by that higher tribunal—public opinion—and if it does not make a long run at The Belasco Theatre it will simply prove that the Theme is above the heads of the average playgoer. In other words the length of its run will measure the length of New York's intelligent play-going public.

What is this Theme so highly commendable?

It has long been the custom of a large majority of well-to-do mothers to train their daughters for "just a wife" and nothing more. Not for motherhood—not for womanhood—but sheer wifery. And wifery of wealth!

Now it might be possible to show up the suicide of this custom by merely parading the misery of some such marriage upon the stage. But this is not the province of Drama! Drama is Conflict and to drive home his argument Mr. Walter saw that he must engage two extreme types in combat. He knew that no commonplace contrast would awaken the mothers who have been slumbering peacefully thru such criminal conditions for centuries.

And it was for this reason that he chose the shocking association of mistress and wife. How better could he illustrate the immortality of the "just a wife" system? The husband married one woman who had nothing but her beautiful sex to offer. She was a splendid feminine specimen! He gave this woman the position of wife but gave his love to another woman who had sex plus—she had business ability and strong personality which brought the husband half his success.

Both women were selling their sex! Here is the horrible truth of his Play! It is not the wife but the WOMAN who makes the helpmeet. After six years of thinking the legal wife evolved into a fitter mate and succeeded to the fuller execution of the contract she had agreed to fill. Isn't this a Theme worth exploiting? Isn't this a blow to hollow social form? Isn't Mr. Walter a more potent preacher than any dozen parsons in the land?

And now that we have dealt with the greatness of this play let us turn our attention to the imperfections which are equally the office of this journal. A little more attention to physical anatomy would have shown the author the true structural divisions of his action. Nothing really happens in the first Act as it stands, and it is therefore not a correct sub-division of the play. Acts I and II set forth the Conditions and should constitute the first legitimate division in the structure. The drama really gets a going by this time and we have the true Beginning of a Play.

A similar mistake occurs in "Paid in Full" by the same author, with respect to the third and fourth Acts. In that instance the action had ended with Act III save for a touch of Theme which could easily have been interwoven and the Conflict closed.

In the modern simplicity Play three acts are sufficient. The author may deceive himself that the peculiar nature of his material demands a greater number of divisions. But is he simply lapsing in Art? The rightful portions of a Play were unconsciously named by Aristotle hundreds of years ago—"The Beginning, the Middle and the End!"

The only serious lapse of Logic in Mr. Walter's Play is the character of Maxcy, a chum of the wife's brother who "butts in" on the most delicate and personal domestic occasions. It must be that the part was tailor-made to afford a friend a comic opportunity. For the fellow does please even though we feel in our bones that he has no rational right in the Conflict. But how many other plays have so few flagrant foreignalities?

THE CITY.

Was the Work Finished by Fitch?

Although Mr. Fitch may have drawn the general outlines for "The City" it is difficult for one familiar with the excellent technique of "The Truth" to believe that this master American craftsman finished the scenes and dialog of this alleged "last play."

"The City" abounds in structural transgressions of almost every sort, yet technical skill was the author's predominant faculty. Hence the hesitation in accepting this crude specimen as the final product of his prolific pen.

Disunity is rampant throughout the structure. Theme is one thing, Plot another, and the actual success of the piece depends upon a tremendous blast of dramatic dynamite which is still a third and distinct factor in the divergent ideas which permeate this Play.

It is the purpose of this article to show that the Play idea which is intended to conform to a Theme consistent with its title is distinct and separate from the main Plot of the structure, and that the strongest single incident Fitch ever wrote which ends the second Act, constitutes a Conflict all by itself that could best be presented in a one-act sketch. These three ideas will be traced out to their solitary unities to show cause for the question: "Was the play finished by Fitch?"

The theme which endeavors to exploit the effects of the searching spirit of city publicity upon the character of all who come within its walls is not embodied in the main Plot of the Play. The story that contains this Theme is the one that opens the Play showing the aspiration of a young attorney for that larger opportunity afforded by the city. After the father's death he goes to New York but his political career is headed off by an exposure of his own moral obliquity (evidence of which is not brought out but merely talked) and this story is wound up with the young man's resolution to mend his ways and begin the battle of life on a clean field.

But not until virtue is rewarded is the curtain allowed to descend for at this juncture a beautiful heroine is cast at his feet without the slightest warning. She assures him that his past life is no obstacle to her eternal affection and all ends happily.

The only recent blunder of like magnitude that this can be compared with is a similar resort to sentimentality in the last act of "Israel." In the latter play the happy-ever-after was said to be the interpolation of an American carpenter. Who knows but the same tinkerer "finished" the Fitch Play?

The second story is by far the most effective one dramatically. There are fragments of it entwined in the Theme story

of Act I, but these particles could easily be woven into the thirty minute sketch which embraces most of the material in Act II ending with the catastrophe that brings down the curtain. This sketch has nothing in common with Act III. It is a completed action in itself and if treated as such would unfold itself as follows: A young girl falls in love with a man employed by her brother. The latter knows that the man is his illegitimate half-brother but conceals this fact from him and from all others while he employs the illicit relative out of a sense of duty. The brother learns of their clandestine marriage—an hour since—and is compelled to tell his employee-half-brother of the terrible mistake. The latter refuses to believe the monstrous secret but rather than have the brother tell the girl the truth he draws a gun and shoots her straight in the heart! This is the sum and substance of the little one-act tragedy but there is much more by way of a morphine fiend's frenzied writhings which might be tacked onto the sketch, just as it is spliced on to the play proper, if mere theatric sensation were desired. And this little playlet is a thing apart from the first and third acts and does not require that part of Act II which deals with the brother's political career which we have designated story #1.

There is a third story which retards the legitimate action of Act II and consumes much of III while it makes a feeble effort to conform to theme. This story drags in details of the marital corruption of a second sister to the young attorney. Her husband is a drunken sot who provokes a little comedy. But their divorce and reconciliation has about as much to do with either of the foregoing play ideas as does the comet Halley.

These three stories comprise the divergent branches of Plot that rend the Unity of the whole. The only one that partakes of the real definition of drama having Conditions, Cause and Conclusion is the second one. The first story is utterly devoid of Cause for in the original the Cause of the second story is interjected as a substitute. The third story is a mere episode from life which fails to assume semblance of drama in any sense.

Perhaps Clyde Fitch wrote this play but his earliest and crudest efforts give no warrant for the belief that he could wander so far astray in technic. None of his other half hundred plays violate the canons of dramatic art with half the felicity. His ripest efforts have been models of good construction. If this master craftsman really did perpetrate this artistic crime in its entirety his dramatic conscience must have been deadened by the roar and echo of the one big scene.

Profit could not have blinded him to the laws of his Art. It may have been that death reached the mortal man within before it claimed the mortal man without.

THE TURNING POINT.

Most Censured Play of the Season.

Most young dramatists are prone to condemn the manager who rejects their coveted manuscripts and waste their years yearning for the financial wherewith to produce their own works of Art "Just to show him."

We wish that we might send every aspiring author in America to see "The Turning Point" so that the prevailing notion that "money makes the dramatic mare go" could be forever discarded. This may be the case in some professions but it is not true of the Theatrical filly!

Preston Gibsen, the author of this piece, had ample funds to give its production every financial provision of success. His effort surpasses the average amateur offering and yet it failed miserably. Why? Because it is not a Play! All the money in America cannot bribe the play going public to place their stamp of approval on something that does not appeal to their emotional faculties, and this is precisely the fate that would attend the financially forced production of 98 out of 100 plays written by intelligent, yes, highly cultivated men and women who have not mastered the fundamentals of play Construction.

Wild disunity abounds in the main Plot and punctures the many minor plots of this distracted attempt at drama. Conditions forecasting a dozen developments of dissonant and distinct actions are reeled off thick and fast in the first few minutes of Act I. At the end of this act no palmist or conjurer could say what this play is to be about. It is simply a mess—a mix-up—and there you are.

In order to clearly convey the violations of Unity to those who have not seen the production it will be necessary to outline, primarily, the author's possible play material. If he had not resorted to monstrosities of biplot his Problem would have been as follows:

Conditions.

1. A broker buys a valuable coal land for a mere song.

Cause.

2. The owner retains the only right of way to market.

Conclusion.

3. He defeats the broker's game?

It is not illogical that in the development of this Problem a love interest should be introduced in which both men are striving for the hand of the same girl. Such a complication in the execution of Plot is easily legitimate and crudely outlined in the play as presented. And so much of the native Plot is raw material for a splendid play!

But Mr. Gibson would not confine his efforts to the construction of a play of normal proportions. He would not stop here. He continued to pile on the agony thick and deep, with sub-plots and counterplots till every character in his play ceases rational existence and becomes a theatrical puppet of artificial stageology.

Besides the legitimate features of Plot above mentioned, he "rings in" a parodized parson and his matronly *inamorata*: an insipid widow who is an unscrupulous flirt (in no slight degree attached to the Plot): an entirely separate conflict between the broker and a juvenile lover centering in the former's betrayal of the latter's sweetheart—her abrupt death and subsequent resurrection—all of which is foreign matter crudely TALKED into the play to the detriment of main plot. The parson's *inamorata* is plunged into another plot, needlessly defiling a mother with the embezzlement of her daughter's funds merely to float still another plot of the old-time mock heroic variety wherein the daughter is forced to marry the "heavy villain" to prevent her mother's name "from being dragged in the dust."

But lest you think absurdity ends here let us relate a couple of counterplots whereupon the leading lady beholds the Southerner giving counsel to the juvenile lover's sweetheart and straightway proceeds to hate our hero #1, and at the same instant the juvenile himself sees the Southerner "chinning his gal" and storms off in a fit of jealous rage!

If a contest were instituted to award a gold medal for the most flagrant violation of the law of Unity; in these two last mentioned instances, Mr. Gibson would deserve the honors! No loftier examples of a desecration of that cardinal principle could well be invented! And yet do you know there is material in this chaotic mass of incongruity for a good play?

The veil between playwriting and mere penmanship is sometimes an invisible thread. With less real effort than the author has applied to this imperfect piece, his same energies, properly directed, might have done a play worth while. Remember the moral, young dramatist, that money never made a makeshift manuscript marketable.

ALIAS JIMMY VALENTINE.

A Photograph of Paul Armstrong.

The proof of a Playwright is his play. A portrait of a writer's playwriting proclivities is plainly depicted in the positive and negative qualities of his work. You can't get away from it—the camera doesn't lie! "Alias Jimmy Valentine" is a snap shot of Mr. Paul Armstrong and the likeness is wonderful! It does not portray a dramatist, however, but a clever workman with eye and ear trained for detecting the possibilities in another fellow's story. He is more the curator than the creator. The play reveals both his ignorance and aptness of Art. It proves one thing; that the author's method of construction is not a safe, scientific system but a loose haphazard process. He begins with no conscious grasp of what he is about and thus allows irrelevant absurdity to supersede the fundamental factors of Plot.

In order to demonstrate this assertion let us reduce the play to its native Problem—not the Problem that we think best but the one that actually exists in Mr. Armstrong's material—the one broad legitimate syllogism of the play which should have governed Unity from curtain to curtain. We will state this Problem in its three clauses; Conditions, Cause and Conclusion.

Problem.

1. An ex-convict baffles a detective's attempt to identify him.
2. In the latter's presence he is compelled to pick a lock.
3. The detective is so pleased he lets him go.

This is the Problem of "Alias Jimmy Valentine," which in other words might be termed the beginning, the middle and the end. Without some such working plan the author is very apt to begin somewhere else than the beginning as does Mr. Armstrong in this latest play. Instead of starting with evidence that "Jimmy" was a convict he takes us into the prison where we see that he actually is a convict and reviews the whole history of his being pardoned just to work in some inane episode contained in his scrap book. It is for this reason that Acts I and II appear to drag heavily. They are not a legitimate part of the play. The real play does not begin until Act III which sets forth the first clause of our proposition; that "Jimmy" is an ex-convict and that he successfully baffles the detective who is hunting him down. "Jimmy" passes himself for another in one of the best made scenes in the play.

Nearly all of Acts I and II are taken up with an effort to "ring in" a pretty little romance of the following PLAUSIBLE stripe: A girl happens to visit Sing Sing and there happens to recite an adventure wherein she happened to be rescued from one bandit by another. She happens to be the niece of the lieutenant governor of the state who happens to call at the prison with her and they happen here to meet the identical hero of her bandit fairy tale. He in turn happens to appear innocent and happens to be pardoned by the girl's uncle and happens to be placed in a position of trust in a national bank by the girl's own father who happens to be credulous enough to take stock in her innocent convict.

Of course all this improbable stuff could be transformed into Drama by proper treatment and adherence to Sequence but it is not worth while for it is not in keeping with Problem! The same could be condensed into a few words, if necessary, or a better Condition Precedent could be invented without consuming two whole acts which even then fail to get the play going.

Another glance at Problem will show that four acts are not required. The first act should set forth the Conditions. As mentioned before the conditions do not call for the past history of "Jimmy's" imprisonment, or the romance of his rescuing the girl, or a host of stunts performed by the inmates of Sing Sing, or Mr. Armstrong's theory concerning the insanity of criminals. The Conditions merely call for evidence of "Jimmy's" rehabilitation and the efforts of the authorities to recapture him on an old charge.

The second act should develop the love story which is incidental to "Jimmy's" reform and lead up to the splendid climax where he is compelled to practice the criminal art of his past "profession." The curtain falls at the moment this predication is realized.

The third act is represented by the fourth act of the original play. "Jimmy" is seen actually operating on the combination lock by means of touch highly sensitized in the sandpapering of his finger tips. He does this in the presence of the detective. There should be some logical solution of the action, however, which is wanting in the original play. This detective who has journeyed all the way to Illinois to secure this culprit announces: "The lady needs you more than the state of Massachusetts." And calmly relinquishes his prize! Is this drama? If a detective gives up a prisoner he has been seeking for years there must be some valid reason for his doing it. But it is dishonest to dodge the issue! Dramatic dishonesty!

How easy it would be to adjust all this by the slightest turn in Plot. In the play a child wanders into the vault and

"Jimmy" must pick the lock to save its life. Let us intensify action by placing the sweetheart in the vault. She was in "Jimmy's" arms when "Doyle" the detective entered and she slyly dodged into this hiding place. "Doyle" has utterly failed to identify "Jimmy" although he is morally certain of his man. He has gone so far as to guarantee "Jimmy" his freedom if he will merely show him the subtle secrets of his craft. "Jimmy" is still obstinate in his declaration that he is not the man. As a last resort "Doyle" slams the huge safe door which locks with a combination. "Jimmy" exclaims that his sweetheart is locked in there and that he does not know the combination! "Pick it!" challenges the detective!

Act III is but a moment later. "Jimmy's" fingers itch with conscious ability to do the old trick. It is too late to mince matters! We hear a faint cry from within! The splendid feat of the criminal locksmith now follows! The girl is rescued and the lovers reunited! With some degree of rational probability it can now be imagined that "Jimmy" will hold "Doyle" to his promise. He has shown him the secrets of his craft. This is an exchange for his liberty!

There is one other detail that goes to show the eternal vigilance required of the Dramatist who would observe Logic in everything. It is the matter of the combination lock. Mr. Armstrong introduces this vault as a new one recently installed in the bank. He has undoubtedly aimed at immunity by placing the scene out in Illinois. He has not gone far enough. Even the back-woods banker has long since relegated this sort of security to the junk heap. The village banker has his time-lock equipment which challenges the smoothest locksmith in the business. Nothing can persuade its tumblers to turn before the hour set by the clock in its mechanism! To meet this contingency the time of the play should be set back to a period when combination locks were in vogue or the point should be established that this particular vault is an obsolete factor in the bank's security. The dramatist who is sincere in his Art will not compromise with the slightest detail of Dramatic Fact.

T H E L I L Y.

A Wretched Structure Artistically Staged.

No better instance of the prevailing paucity of good plays can be cited than David Belasco's adaptation of this deficient French Drama. Not that he has failed to see his opportunity to create one great scene and one intensely human type but to the artist all discord is painful and without the wizard's incomparable stage management this piece would be absolutely intolerable.

Do you think that he would concentrate all the powers of his craft on one solitary situation if he could obtain Plays that were Drama from start to finish? He could write such a Play, to be sure, but he is a very busy man. He hasn't the time and when a vacancy occurs by the abrupt end of another production he is obliged to take what he can lay his hands on. His triumph in this instance is not the Dramatist's success but the stage master's achievement. He knows the call of the mob so well that he can bank upon a single moment of tremendous magnetism portrayed with utmost skill. The fact that few critics, even, saw the yawning gaps in structure speaks volumes for the supremacy of his craftsmanship!

If we were to accept this as a specimen of David's original composition it would simply show that the Dramatist had not kept pace with the procession which is advancing the structural standards of his chosen profession at break neck speed. And heaven knows they needed advancement! But the adaptor is apt to be blinded to the flaws of the original writers, particularly if they be authors of renowned fame, and again he may not be licensed by them to cut and slash at liberty.

The first act of "The Lily" is without exception the most slipshod construction of any play in the entire Belasco group. It ranks only in inferiority with Preston Gibson's "The Turning Point" treated elsewhere in this journal. There is no definite purpose in the act and the few Plot essentials that do crop out in a desultory fashion give little evidence of the keen oversight of a master mind. The chief cause of the ineffectiveness of Act I is that it performs no legitimate function in the whole play. The minor elements presented in it are so out of Sequence that Action limps with a crutch. The Act does not advance the Action as such an epoch in the Plot should. The first act should set forth the Beginning of the Play. Many of the Conditions given are not essential to the main Plot and could well be left to inference or be taken as a matter of course. All could be worked into Act II which is the legitimate Beginning or first Act of the play.

P R O B L E M .

Conditions.

An old maid has sacrificed matrimonial chances for a paternal despot.

Cause.

The younger sister's happiness meets the same opposition.

Conclusion.

The old maid's bitter life strengthens her to defy the irate father?

Of course, this broad structural synopsis does not prescribe what course the working Plot will take but it serves as a guide to the cardinal requisites of same. The arbitrary father flavors the thing as French. No Yankee girl submits to such tyranny. The foreign point of view, therefore is a fundamental in Problem for without this basis the Plot would have no foundation to rest upon. We must therefore accept it if we would have a play even though the outrage is inconsistent with parental obedience as we practice it in America.

As implied in the Problem the old maid's sacrifice is necessarily a matter of history for she is already withered when we first see her as a result of the life sacrifice. This Condition is readily established as the Plot proceeds but begins with the second Act of Mr. Belasco's play and therefore the second Act really begins the Conflict. It is the valid first act. The next step would be to show the younger sister's clandestine love affair against the background of the fossilized old wretch of a father who would almost eat the child alive that ran counter to his pleasure!

At this point the degenerate French standard has made the girl's lover a married man who has no right to love her. This moral slope could well be eliminated for there is abundant Plot material in the powerful climax which takes its origin in the old maid's motherly protection from the father of the little sister who has loved without license in her natural effort to escape the old man's rule. In a stricter sense even to mar the girl's chastity might be deemed Disunity. It adds spice to the scene but the line between legitimate drama and effect for effect's sake is sometimes difficult to discern. The great force of the scene is the operation of the second law of Nature—the love of parent for child—which is portrayed in this motherly old maid's affection for her child-sister. Through the medium of this girl she craves the realization of the love that was lost to her. It is now the only outlet of that pent up affection in her bosom which in youth had been crushed out by the identical tyrant who now attempts a repetition of such arbitrary rule.

There is much to admire in Act III. The superb gradation with which the girl's confession is wrung from her lips—little by little—is a height of Art most worthy of Belasco. The old maid's final rise to the defence of her tender little sister is a scene that will live with indelible life in the minds of the spectator. There is every temptation to let loose here, tooth and nail! The audience is ready to riddle the old rascal themselves. But the restraint with which the moment is handled! Ah! There's the Art! Most any author must have shown his teeth a trifle! But the cold full tones that emanate and

echo from the years of wretched subjugation suffered by this poor woman penetrate the soul and find a sympathy that is the personification of DRAMA!

Now after such a tribute to the skill of this workman our comment on the paucity of plays might be a trifle incoherent. But we said good plays. And by a good play is meant a uniformly well built drama of specific Theme and purpose which sets about unfolding its Conditions, developing its Cause and attaining its Conclusion in a simple, subtleized, straightforward fashion. This definition does not admit a makeshift hastily patched up merely to SELL to the public a few powerful scenes no matter what their effectiveness. Mr. Belasco can construct a good play, we are certain. But this case is much like that of Mr. Fitch with "The City." If America's foremost stage master had much to do with "The Lily" his mind was dazzled by the one culminating moment of stupendous dramatic magnitude!

THE BARRIER.

Presbrey's Dramatization of Beach's Novel.

"The Barrier" is an example of good Play material so bungled in one instance of the dramatization as to impair its effectiveness. If properly treated, however, there is little hope for such a Play. Undisguised melodrama is a thing of the past. This thrilling tale of border life fails to produce the illusion of reality upon a tenderfoot audience.

Its failure is not entirely a matter of vogue, however. There are technical reasons why "The Barrier" does not grip with the power inherent in it. The chief of these causes lies in the fact that the cart is hitched before the horse. We get effect before cause.

Long before there is any reason assigned for "John Gale's" trepidation we see terror written in every move he makes. This is not Action. It is a flagrant violation of Sequence. Our sympathies are solicited before we have a knowledge of the source of this old man's anxiety. In other words the first essential of Action is omitted. What the audience does not know it cannot act upon and an undefined danger is not capable of arousing Action. The information that is necessary to our intelligent comprehension of Acts I and II does not cross the footlights till Act III. Here we find out that "Gale" was charged with murder actually committed by another. This is one of the first conditions that should have been established in Act I. It is not one of the elements of doubt that need be held in solution for the climax of the play. It is precedent fact that is necessary to the interpretation of Plot.

Here we get the difference between the dramatist's and the storyteller's treatment. The latter may build his conflict between himself and the reading public—the former must make his struggle between the characters on the stage. The novelist may spring all sorts of surprises on his reader whereas to bewilder your auditor is to deal a deathblow to Drama. This does not mean that the playwright must tell his audience how he is going to solve the problem of his play but that he cannot obey the laws of his Art and allow characters to perform stunts that are unintelligible. You will find spectators constantly asking WHY. A play is a rational structure and each particle in its building must be recognized as belonging to the whole. To introduce the minutest atom of foreign or incoherent matter merely confuses the auditor needlessly.

This one instance of structural deficiency is cited not because it is the only one but because it is of magnitude sufficient to destroy any play written. "The Barrier" abounds in trifling incongruities but on the whole is a remarkably well built drama. In spite of the fact that New York does not want melodrama in the nude state we believe that this play would have made a better showing had the one cardinal weakness been rectified. The Plot for the most part is admirably conceived and more skill is manifested than in many of the more successful plays now running.

I N C O N S T A N T G E O R G E .

An Insipid Horse-play Farce.

The specimens of French plays seen here this season do not sustain the supremacy of technic heretofore accredited the dramatists of that nation. "Inconstant George" at least is not a good type in its American raiment. But there's the rub. We never know how much the original has been robbed when it has passed through the importing processes of translation and transplantation. For the French point of view and moral standard will not fit the American audience without considerable modification.

Bronson Howard once wrote a farce "Saratoga" as insipid as "Inconstant George." He was writing then, however, a style fully up to the times. No sane manager would attempt to stage "Saratoga" today without labeling it a relic of antiquity. It fitted the unevolved audience of former days who assembled to witness the antics of the actors punctuated with occasional puns. That audience has passed with the contemporary species of drama that suited it and the dramatist who goes along writing the obsolete form must hope for a fossilized producer to appreciate his plays. He must also look for

an antediluvian actor to take the part. Poor old "Uncle" John Drew hobbles obediently through the role of "George" with the perfunctory pitifulness of a well trained work horse.

Like "Israel" this play opens with the clumsy three-ring circus introduction. There are four women and three men on stage of whom we know nothing and care less. These people whom we do not know talk of others we have not seen and the auditor who has lost the art of making up the deficit by continual reference to his program is adrift. He cannot see all that is going on in the "three rings" with an eye that has been trained to observe a solitary story simply told where every atom of acting is self-explanatory.

There is no coherent Plot to this silly farce and the wobbly structure defies analysis on legitimate standards. It is a conglomeration of marital infidelity, horse-play and snatches of vaudeville and burlesque. It would not even serve as a comprehensive negative model for study. The structural infringements are too wide of technical definition. At best the thing is a hopeless relic of antiquity.

S A L V A T I O N N E L L .

A Hopeless String of Dissociated Episodes.

With the popular amateur misconception that a succession of disconnected episodes, occasional uproar and haphazard happenings constitute that dramatic Action known as a play, Mr. Sheldon did his best to live up to the highest ideal of drama visible to the naked eye at the time he wrote this piece.

For in this Art as in all others we must see the image before we can give expression to it. The only part of the dramatic picture that penetrated Mr. Sheldon's comprehension was that curious little flirt of the brush which distributes the pigment. And he was in no wise watchful of where he applied it. A dab on the canvas or one on the wall was immaterial to him. Any old swish of the brush only so it simulated the expert stroke of the painter.

This play belongs to the spineless species for it has no structural backbone. It has no central support for the anatomy. The connecting cartilage is also missing. The one common characteristic contained in every real play from Sophocles to Shakespeare, from Shakespeare to Sheldon IS NOT THERE!

A slum girl loves a worthless convict who is sent to prison for accidental murder leaving her the mother of his child. She is rescued by a Salvation sister (in a very thrilling moment of the triumph of good over evil). "Jim," the convict, returns and drags poor Nell from her pedestal. After a rambling conflict between them she crawls back to the higher

plane and in a most humorous duet with her young son prays for the forsaken criminal father. An attempt is made to show that this prayer is materialized and "Jim" joins the "Army."

This is the nearest approach to Plot—though it is not Plot for it lacks the one fundamental factor CAUSE! There is no suggestion of underlying Cause for the completed Action. Without Cause there can be no Conclusion. Without this prime requisite the most skillful Dramatist on earth could not produce a plausible play.

To illustrate more clearly the missing link in the three loop chain of Problem we will devise an imaginary CAUSE that would make this play conform to the elementary Law of Structure, the only suggestion of which, in the original, is the supposed efficacy of prayer which is a new means of placing God in the cast of characters.

P R O B L E M .

Conditions.

A convict loves a slum girl who becomes the illicit mother of his child.

Cause.

She is raised to a higher moral plane which causes her to be repelled at her former suitor.

Conclusion.

Her repulse awakens the dormant manhood within him.

Do you see the slight turn that converts an indefinite nothing into a precise something? It is only necessary to change the rambling uncertainty of Nell's attitude toward this convict into a decided refusal to consider him in his present depravity, to transform mere narrative into dramatic Action. There is a problem—something to be done—something to be solved. Instead of relying on the heavenly power to reform poor "Jim" we come down to earth and rehabilitate him by human means. For Drama is a conflict between human wills—not between superhuman and human. The superhuman is not susceptible of convincing presentation upon the stage.

In addition to Structural neglect, "Salvation Nell" abounds in absurdities of all sorts. The goat love of Nell for this wretch of a convict is an example of carnal lust unfit for public presentation. Particularly is this true when the chimpanzee sphere of affection is uncalled for in Plot. The prayer referred to is a most preposterous thing. The concert cackle of mother and son could produce nothing save emotions of mirth and sacrilege. The effort to stir up a counter affection of one of the Salvation officers for "Nell" is misapplied invention and

dangerous disunity. A telephone episode where "Nell" threatens to call up the police and expose "Jim" is illogical farce. Why wouldn't this dare-devil pulverize the telephone with one pass of his brawny fist? As an accompaniment for the prayer Providence throws in a thunderstorm for full measure. Anything plumped in after this fashion merely reveals the will of the author—it never becomes a part of the play. Against such feeble Action a prostitute stands out as the one bit of virile truth in the Plot. We have been so bored with irrelevant stuff that we welcome the harlot in contrast who is at least consistent with herself.

In Act III the issue is helplessly adrift! Several sub-plots scramble for momentary existence but no sign of the main Plot is in sight. Of course, the absence of Cause obviates a Conclusion and no definite solution can be reasonably expected. There is no Sequence of events in this act. We flit from one incongruity to another. The lovers wish to make love in the public street and the playwright waves his magic wand! All of the hundred heads that hung from the windows a moment before now kindly duck and the accommodating fruit man deserts his stand leaving his wares an open treat to the boys of the Bowery. All is quiet! Save the cooing of the lovers and the steady beating of the pulse of common sense—"False! False! False! For an audience will feel the fake if they cannot define their feelings.

From curtain to curtain in this final act there is not the feeblest breath of Dramatic Action to sustain or stimulate interest. The play with no beginning, with no middle part—can have no end! The three clauses of Problem are so correlated and interdependent that one cannot exist without another—without the other two.

Moral: Let PROBLEM Rule Supreme!

THE MAN WHO STOOD STILL.

Not a Play.

Several subscribers have requested an analysis of "The Man Who Stood Still," but we regret to admit our inability to perform such an operation on something that is not a play. The piece was evidently a hasty pudding made as a vehicle for Mr. Louis Mann's eccentric acting. It appears to be a hodge-podge of particles copied from successful plays such as "The Music Master" and "Way Down East." There is painful effort at Action but little or no success in the creation of that subtle principle. The promulgators of the piece seem to have confused activity with Action. Every character bustles

about with undue attempt at excitement but this is not Dramatic Action. The piece is of the old school of many-story drama which is now obsolete. Its only possible value to the student is its example of the sort of drama to be avoided.

YOUR VOTE COUNTS.

Each subscriber is invited to express his preference of the plays to be treated technically in "The Dramatist" from time to time. If your selection does not appear in the list you will know it is for one of two reasons. Either that we are unable to see the play for purposes of analysis or that a larger majority of votes have been cast in favor of the ones criticized.

"WORLD" PRIZE PLAY.

\$500 Prize Awarded a Modern Play Idea.

The great lesson to be learned from the New York "World" prize contest award is that a picked board of Judges selected the New Type of Drama with a single centred story, devoid of all suggestion of sub-plot, confining every moment to the ONE Theme and thought contained in the Problem, which is as follows:

PROBLEM.

Conditions.

To relieve the poverty of the household a mother resumes her professional work as an actress. Her child dies.

Cause.

Piqued by her superiority the husband charges her with maternal neglect.

Conclusion.

Will she tolerate this monster of selfishness?

Here is a foundation for a play intensely human and realistic. The dramatist (for she has well earned her title to the distinction) has eliminated all silly sentimentality and clung to the legitimate purpose of propounding her One Straightforward Story of this husband and wife. The people are real creatures of the sort she has seen and known and no effort is made to besmear them with a varnish of theatric-ideality. They LIVE and breathe the same air continually inhaled by the spectator and for this reason will bind the interest of the audience.

Mrs. Martha Fletcher Bellinger, the winner of this remarkable prize, has made one serious mistake in the Scenario draft of her Play idea. The Action is divided into four Acts where

the material calls for but three. Instead of a first act to show the poverty of the home and the mother's decision to resume her stage career; a second act to portray her stage success, interrupted by the terrible news of her baby's fatal illness; a third act for the husband's charge of ambitious neglect and a fourth act to end this struggle; she should divide the Action as follows:

Act I. and Act II. same as original.

Act III. Husband's charge of neglect really actuated by pique at her superior talents. Wife's meek decision to resign stage career. Further despotism which causes wife to desert this selfish wretch.

Here the Action ends as finally as Problem can prescribe; Any attempt to attach further complications merely threaten the beginning of another play in Act IV which is so clearly the case in "Paid in Full" and "The Third Degree." It is a great thing to know when to stop! Problem tells you. Just to achieve the happy ending, the author of this prize play expects to "ring in" lover for the wife in the character of a playwright. If this is done an economy could be attained by making a composite of the stage manager who employs her and the playwright who writes the play in which she is to star. Another structural defect that will probably receive attention under the advice of professional management is the elimination of spurious set scenes in the second and fourth Acts. This is an antedeluvian form seldom resurrected by modern Dramatists!

But before we dismiss the subject let us glance into the history of this woman whose work has won favor with five worthy judges and see if this Scenario was a thing dashed off in a fit of inspiration or the result of careful study of the fundamentals of Drama.

Mrs. Bellinger left college in 1892. She had already given much thought to dramatic and literary pursuits. Year after year she toiled and struggled with her hobby availing the best technical advice obtainable until she finally became a public lecturer on the subject in the schools of New York. Twenty years, at least, may be reckoned as her preparatory period and this is her first play to be produced! Does this look to you like a flash of genius? A spell of inspiration? Or the reward of work, work, work?

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Enchained

A Rare Specimen of Modern Construction.

It may be deemed an assumption on the part of an American to sit in judgment on the work of the Grand Prize winner of the French Academy, but even though the French pay more attention to structure than any other dramatic writers in the world, they have yet to resolve the art of playwriting into a safe and sound science. Of course, the French moral standard is bound to infest their drama and unfit much of their best product for American presentation despite the maudlin efforts of our own play butchers to chop them to fit our stage. But the ethics of any play should be measured inside the limits the author has imposed upon himself and not by any external standard.

The commendable qualities of structure in this play outnumber the negatives in a greater proportion than any manuscript we have reviewed, comprising a list of many thousands. The fundamentals of Play construction are observed in nearly every instance so that it serves as an excellent model for the student.

Drama.

This subtle dramatic agent so little understood by the amateur is well illustrated in "Enchained." By Drama we mean that effect produced upon the audience by the things that HAPPEN upon the stage. If you want to see this principle in full operation, calling forth doubt, sympathy and suspense, read Scene VI of the first Act. Note how the constantly drifting relations between these two characters keep interest alive. Note the superb dignity and extreme fidelity of the author's art. The Scene is brief, so brief that we all want more of it. We sit in breathless suspense wondering what is to come of this complicity.

In Scene VIII another phase of Action is created by an opposite course. It may not vibrate our sympathies with as much delight but to the Plot this Scene is just as essential. It promotes the Play. It is a decided stride for progress, advancing the completed Conflict perceptibly.

Scene VI of Act II is fully as powerful as the same number in Act I. No one, better than the beginner, knows how to make a sameness in all Scenes that occur between the same characters. You will note no similarity here, even though we have the same characters, dealing with the same emotion, but creating an entirely new effect for the reason that there is infinite progress in the Conflict. The pot is boiling! New fuel is thrown into the fire continually. See what restraint is exercised by the dramatist toward the end of Scene VI Act II. How readily the novice would have thrown them into each other's arms, thereby destroying that potent sympathy inspired with the audience by their nobler conduct.

Scenes.

Please notice that the Scene divisions refer to the structural units and do not mean a change of stage setting. This is what we invariably mean when we speak of Scenes in technical discussion. Without Scenes there can be no Play. A Scene is a little Play in itself. Note what marvellous headway Her vieu makes in a brief Scene of less than a page at times. Take Scene VIII in Act I, for instance. The author wishes to show that Irene keeps her promise to Michel: "I shall forever keep myself for myself." Pages of dialog could not accomplish what he does here in seventeen speeches!

And strange to say the poorest Scene in the whole play is one of the longest. It is Scene I in Act III. In a well written Scene there is not a word of the dialog that is said without inevitable Cause. The character must say it, either because of the predicament in which he is placed or by mere reason of his nature of which we must have seen traits that give credence to his utterance. There is hardly a line in the above mentioned Scene that has the dramatic force back of it. The words are there because the author wanted to get certain information before the audience and for this moment lapsed in his art and employed the amateur's method of TELLING the audience first hand. Valanton is as foreign to this Scene as the king of the cannibal islands. The information that is pumped across the footlights should come out indirectly and inevitably through the dialog of the principals concerned. There is nothing doing between Valanton and Fergan and where there is nothing at issue you may be sure that mere rhetoric and inaction will result.

A splendid contrast to this flaw may be found in Scene VI of the first Act. Here there IS an issue. These two beings are in Love. Circumstances are keeping them separated. The purpose of the Scene makes it throb with life and emotion! Observe this difference in these two examples and you have the main secret of Scene construction, which is half of the art of Playwriting.

Sequence.

And now we come to the gravest transgression of principle in the Play; an effort to "ring in" a factor of preparation for subsequent effect at a juncture entirely out of Sequence. In Scene V of Act I as Valanton is getting ready to depart Pauline says: "You were very delicate when you were little," and Michel admits it, citing heredity as the cause. The thought is plumped into the midst of another Scene where its violation of Sequence destroys effectiveness. And the hint itself is a very important one. Without this intimation of Michel's affliction we cannot properly comprehend the impending catastrophe in Act III when we see the son of Michel the heir to his father's malady. Lack of such comprehension dilutes suspense, for the audience should begin to see Fergan's impending doom. If we do not, the rudiments of Action are at fault!

But this preparation must come in somewhere, you will say. Yes, and there is a place for it, just as there is a real harbor for every thought waiting to be launched. Look at Scene VI of this Act. Michel is going away. Irene does not want him to go. Wouldn't it be the most natural thing in the world for her to advance the argument that he was not strong enough to make this trip. Michel would retort that he was never stronger, that this delicacy is a thing of heredity with him. All the more reason for Irene wanting him to remain where she could watch over him. And there you are! The item of preparation has here crept in without obtruding itself upon a foreign Scene, and besides fusing with the dialog in hand it has served to advance the sentiment of the Scene of which it is now truly a part.

Future Study.

We dedicate this Play to the sincere student of the Drama who wants a model of good structure. When helplessly adrift in accomplishing your point refer to this masterpiece and see how Hervieu did it. You will find few patterns that will serve as well.

We shall refer to this Play from time to time for illustration, to drive home our discussion on principle. Please feel at liberty to communicate on any point that confuses you. If you care to rewrite Scene I in Acts I or III we will analyse your effort. These are the two weakest Scenes in the play. Persevere and study! Look upon your art as the physician-candidate contemplates his course at the University. The dramatic is the most subtle Science of them all.

ENCHAINED

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

By Paul Hervieu

Translated by Ysidor Asckenasy

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Characters:

Michael Davernier.
Ferdinand Valanton.
Robert Fergan.
A Servant (man.)
Rene Fergan.
Pauline Valanton.
Irene Fergan.

ACT I

The Stage represents an elegant drawing-room. In the rear a conservatory. Doors at right and left. Lamps lit. Light as for small reception.

Scene I.

Irene, Pauline.

(As the curtain rises PAULINE questions her sister with tenderness. IRENE, agitated, nervous, traverses the stage its entire length. The men are smoking and can be seen behind the glazed door of the conservatory.)

PAULINE.—Finally, for what can you reproach your husband?

IRENE (with vehemence).—His incapacity to make me love him.

PAULINE.—Whose fault is it? You accuse him of not loving you. Perhaps he could answer that you are not affectionate.

IRENE.—Ah! I feel that I would know how to cherish some one, if that some one for whom I am longing with all my heart would only come! But Robert, after ten years of married life, of life in common, has not even made me resigned, and I am now in despair.

PAULINE.—Ah! when I saw last month that that devilish law of divorce was voted, I immediately thought of the new stimulant you would find in it; you and all like you, my poor Irene, who until now were contented with making simply a very bad household—

IRENE.—I was never satisfied.

PAULINE.—Why don't you arrange your life differently? You have no child to console you; go into society to amuse yourself. Do not refuse the opportunities of being outdoors as much as possible. Here, in this house so excellently planned for receiving guests; with such comfort; with a jolly fellow as a husband and a charming woman as hostess,—you should begin to entertain again. Reopen your circle, which you have narrowed, so that it scarcely counts any one but myself, your old sister, not exceedingly amusing, and your brother-in-law. By and by have an occasional evening with us.

IRENE.—It is not pleasure that I need; it is happiness. I crave and weep for the lack of it; you advise me to take only drugs.

PAULINE.—I repeat, Robert, no doubt, is not ideal; but it is yourself who makes your misfortune, with your dreams and your lively and excitable disposition. This will all pass, alas! and sooner than you know—

IRENE.—Can you reproach me for being different from this man who feels enthusiasm for nothing, who revolts against nothing, who is nothing, nothing but my master, for me—

PAULINE.—For you, who are ready to listen to everything, who feel all things passionately, who are ready to live and die for everything.

IRENE.—I do not pretend to be of a superior nature. I have no vanity. I should not ask my husband to be a great man. It would have been enough, perhaps, that he were a man, an ordinary man, possessing the ordinary virtues, and even vices, but also emotions, the power to feel pain, to be interested in life. But my husband does not give me even the possibility of commiserating him, to spend for him a bit of my heart, which is so large!

PAULINE.—Notwithstanding, you have very fine occasions to show a little pity! Just see: your disagreements in everything, your discords, your quarrels; see; There is much to anger, to enrage him.

IRENE (with a restrained irony).—You don't know him. Such men as he are always calm, in their conviction of being right. When he rises in the morning he is ready to be right all day. He is right with the servants, with the horses, with everything. In all stories that he relates there is always one who was wrong, while he was right.

PAULINE.—He is not right, then, against you?

IRENE (wild, sullen).—Yes! As a husband he uses his power against me whenever it is convenient to him, but without the least regard whether it is convenient to me.

PAULINE.—I take the liberty of giving you a sermon. It is I who caused you to be married and in a manner exactly as

I was married by our mother. My husband is identical with yours. They both have the same manner of conduct, the same kind of idleness in their equal wealth. Their habits of clubs, sports, hunting are almost similar. Both are sons of rich families, having had fathers who worked hard; they and others like them form a legion of similar husbands, who have wisely married, before being too baldheaded, before being too ugly, young girls richly endowed like us, excellently educated and reared in convents like ours. Their households compose the good middle class of society. And as for my part, I am very well satisfied with my lot. Ferdinand and I love each other sincerely—just as we should.

IRENE.—Oh! I know that. You are one of a certain limited number of wives always satisfied with their lives. But it is you who at the right moment will make also the most resigned widows. The one and the other are of the same kind.

PAULINE (a little offended).—I don't quite see the connection.

IRENE.—Is that so? Just a few months ago, at the dinner when Michel Davernier told us of his trip to Greece, do you recall what your husband said? He said very naturally: "Should I have the misfortune to lose my wife, and were I still young enough, I should take just such a trip? You seemed to find this also very natural."

PAULINE.—Why, was it not?

IRENE.—What? Is that a good husband, who in presence of his wife should thus foresee a possibility of becoming a widower, to start a trip with just a little baggage?

PAULINE.—You always go to the extreme.

IRENE.—And you? Is that, then, the manner of being in perfect accord in a household? It is not like that I want to be loved; nor do I care to love like that. It is against such misery that I cry and struggle here.

PAULINE (maliciously).—If I gave but little attention to what my husband said, it is, no doubt, because I amused myself watching you.

IRENE.—Me?

PAULINE.—Yes, you. While Michel Davernier kept us under the charm of his speech, his ideas seemed to me devilishly advanced in every respect; but you gave the impression of finding them very eloquent.

IRENE (with embarrassment).—What do you mean to say?

PAULINE.—Would you like me to add even the reason to which I attribute the particular nervous irritation that you feel against your husband? It is because he lacked, I confess it,

ability and refinement, which Michel showed during the discussion. Since we have again met the friend of our childhood, your husband has given you but very little opportunity to show how small he is.

IRENE (agitated).—Then you think—what do you think?

PAULINE.—I think that you were wounded in your self-love, and that there is nothing in it. All this will pass (pointing to the back of the stage). The smokers are coming back. Your eyes are red. You should perhaps—

IRENE.—Yes, make myself presentable. (She goes into her chamber—right).

Scene II.

Pauline, Fergan.

FERGAN.—How is this, my dear Pauline? My wife leaves you alone?

PAULINE.—You came just in time to take her place.

FERGAN.—In fact, I came to take leave of you. Irene did not think it necessary to tell me that we would have guests. I had to pretend urgent business to avoid the company of your Mr. Davernier. I have come to believe that he is a fellow of great value, but he is poison to me. I left him with Ferdinand, who, it seems, can endure him more than I.

PAULINE.—And you go away to make your indispensable visit to the club?

FERGAN.—Oh! indispensable? No! But there is a little group of friends who play the game among themselves. When we take leave at seven o'clock, we say: 'Will you be here this evening?' 'I will be if you will be.' 'Well, then, I'll be.' Then we have a mark, an aim, our little word to keep.

PAULINE.—Did you never ask yourself if there was no other thing of more importance to you? Yes; the peace of your home. What do you think your wife feels whenever you leave her alone at home?

FERGAN.—My wife? She is enchanted! You could certainly see how sullen and disobliging she acted towards me all the time at dinner. Well, the moment she knows that I am away, I wager she will become very amiable, very joyous. The moment I come where she is, she becomes gloomy. When I depart, she feels at once an air of deliverance.

PAULINE.—Instead of being contented with things as they are, you should try to change them. The situation is indeed grave.

FERGAN.—What would you have me do? It is Irene who does not suffer me any more. That began, I do not know when; and continues, I do not know why; and I don't care even to give the impression of perceiving it.

PAULINE.—If you become stubborn on your side, she will become stubborn on hers, and the breach between you will become more and more wide.

FERGAN.—The worse! I have thought a great deal. My conscience does not reproach me for anything. Of what does Irene complain?

PAULINE.—Of nothing precisely—of not being happy.

FERGAN.—Does she believe I am? With her singular, capricious character, her continual hostilities, her glum and scowling look! She should bear that in mind: the more she comports herself so, the more I shall go for fresh air and shall wait until that passes.

PAULINE.—But then, what will become of her during that time?

FERGAN.—She will think the matter over.

PAULINE.—Oh! She is of such a nature that you might wait a long while for her submission.

FERGAN (with authority).—She is my wife.

PAULINE.—She is first herself, and then your wife.

FERGAN.—I married her to give her a peaceful and agreeable home. I ask her to share with me an ordinary, possible life, like all the world.

PAULINE.—Irene is a person who is not like all the world.

FERGAN.—I pity her. Whoever is not like the rest of the people is of necessity wrong. As you see, it is not I who must change. For my part I take life as it presents itself. Irene is constantly dreaming. I never dream. And I do not understand how one can wish for anything better than a peaceful life. It is your sister who must change, and you should tell her so.

PAULINE.—I told her the best I could, just a few minutes ago.

FERGAN.—Did you? And what argument did she use against me?

PAULINE.—The most adroit of all—it is beyond your comprehension.

Scene III.

Pauline, Fergan, Irene.

(IRENE scowls as she sees her husband; she stops for a while.)

FERGAN (low to PAULINE).—There she is. (Loud.) Here you have company. I shall go away. (Irene cheers up.) (Low.) Do you see? (Loud.) Good by. (He bows slightly to IRENE, who lets him pass, and he goes out through the left.)

Scene IV.

Pauline, Irene.

IRENE.—Did you speak of me?

PAULINE.—Certainly! We had a heart to heart talk.

IRENE.—Oh! Then you should understand each other very well!

PAULINE.—Just as well as I understand you.

Scene V.

The same, Valanton, Michel Davernier. (The last two arrive from the conservatory.)

VALANTON.—So, did I not convince you?

MICHEL.—Not in the least—

VALANTON.—I was about to marry off Mr. Davernier.

IRENE.—To whom?

VALANTON.—To whom? How do I know? We did not reach that far. I said to him: "Now look, you are thirty years old. Your personal merits, your eminent situation in the university, entitle you to a wife with a large dowry, and it is for you to find her. It is only a short time since you returned to Paris; you did not make undesirable acquaintances nor any entangling alliances—"

PAULINE.—Oh!

VALANTON.—"Consequently, you don't love any one; then go ahead and marry! The first thing to do in such a case is to say to oneself, 'I want to marry.' Afterwards, there is nothing left but to look for a desirable match. Of course, as usual, one compares, chooses, and gives preference. This is worth more than the opposite method; to provide one's self with a woman first, and decide to marry her later—"

PAULINE (to MICHEL)—And what did you answer to these exhortations?

MICHEL.—To me marriage, birth, and death constitute the three great solemnities of our existence. I attribute to each an equal importance. I look at them with the same spirit. Personally, we do not anticipate our birth; we die involuntarily when our time comes. So, also, I think that marriage should be accomplished without our intervention, just as well as our birth; without preparing for it more than we prepare for death. I should like marriage to come suddenly, fatally, instinctively, through the sovereign action of nature. The sacramental "yes," it seems to me, should come forth from our hearts, because it was put therein mysteriously, unknown to us, as if it were the first mewing, as it shall be the last sigh.

IRENE.—Nature takes care to give us birth and make us die. It does not care to marry us.

MICHEL.—In fact, it watches how we fall in love in spite of ourselves, with one that excludes every one else. And this sentiment is as arbitrary, as undefinable, as divine, as is the law which first opens our eyes, and then closes them to the light.

PAULINE.—Still, one has the liberty to get married or not; we are free to marry without love, and even against love.

MICHEL.—Exactly. Here nature inspired itself on the subject. It is not brutal, as in the question of life and death. It is more humble and very gallant. It insinuates, beseeches, delays, and torments.

IRENE.—And after all it is powerless to make people refrain from marrying for family reasons, for reasons of convenience, or any other reasons, which are naught but reasons.

MICHEL.—We may disregard nature for a while, or we may not wait till it announces itself, but you may rest assured that sooner or later it will assert itself; it will either confirm through love the marriage of those who disregarded it at the beginning, or will make them unite with some one else outside—as in nature.

VALANTON.—I know only one way of marrying; the city hall and the church.

MICHEL.—Marriage is love, to which the virtuous customs have nobly added the city hall and the church. In your system, it would be nothing else but the serious action of signing an important contract. I can see in this kind of engagement the most notable act of the bourgeoisie, but I deny it the character, the fatal beauty, of being one of the three great human acts.

PAULINE.—Is it at the French schools in Athens that one learns things like that?

MICHEL.—No, in the school of life, where, my dear madam, you were present at my debut.

VALANTON.—It is true, then, that you were the first playmate of my little sister-in-law?

MICHEL.—We were neighbors in our gardens at St. James. A day came when I had no father, no mother, no garden. But the illusion of still having a family, of a place in the world, I found in the good neighboring home.

A Servant (coming in).—The carriage of Mr. Valanton is ready.

VALANTON (to the Servant).—All right. Give us our coats. (The servant goes out.)

PAULINE.—You were very delicate when you were little.

MICHEL.—Yes, very sickly. I inherited that from my parents.

IRENE.—And he was a bad boy, too.

MICHEL.—Truly?

PAULINE.—Not at all. I have a vague recollection that he was very gentle.

IRENE.—You did not know what more things to invent, that I should not always end by crying, and above all, you used to assume such a haughty air, and become angry, and then go away.

MICHEL (melancholy).—That is probably the way the boys cry. (During this VALANTON has risen and made a sign to his wife, who also is ready to go away.)

VALANTON (to Irene).—You will excuse us, dear friend, but I arose this morning at five o'clock to go hunting, and I ought to start again tomorrow morning. I am literally worn out, it simply kills me.

IRENE.—If that were work, yes; but as it is amusement—(goes toward MICHEL).—Good by, Mr. Davernier.

MICHEL (who also rose).—I go. I beg your pardon, perhaps I detained you by my staying a little too long. (To PAULINE and to IRENE.) But it was in some respects my farewells that I wanted to bid, and which I prolonged.

IRENE (with emotion).—Farewell?

PAULINE (with a simple curiosity).—Are you going away again?

MICHEL.—I am charged with a mission of researches in Asia Minor.

IRENE.—And you must depart at once?

MICHEL.—I should be ready in a very short time.

PAULINE (whom her husband hastens to the door of the conservatory).—Will you not come to pay me a last visit?

MICHEL.—Certainly. (MICHEL stays to take leave of IRENE, while PAULINE and VALANTON go out.)

Scene VI.

Irene, Michel.

IRENE.—Why must you go? Tell me about this project which is so unexpected?

MICHEL.—I should have preferred not to speak at all.

IRENE.—And it seemed to you best to let us know through a letter that you had gone, and would remain away for a long time?

MICHEL.—Don't scold me, please.

IRENE.—What made you take such a resolution?

MICHEL.—I once went away for reasons known by no one but myself. The time passed slowly. I tried to delude myself, and then I made the mistake of coming back. To-day I have first realized that mistake—I must depart.

IRENE.—The reasons that you had and still have, is it impossible to let me know them?

MICHEL.—No. There is no one else to whom I could tell them.

IRENE (confused).—Ah!

MICHEL.—Ask me.

IRENE.—I do not dare.

MICHEL.—Well, then, it is I who shall dare. Above all, the long months that I passed in the very heart of antique things have undoubtedly diverted my attention from my own life. Leave the present, and let me take you with me in my recollections along a sweet and sad walk through a temple in ruins.

IRENE.—I understand very well that you are going to invent one of those games of which I spoke a few minutes ago, and which always made me shed tears.

MICHEL.—When your marriage was decided upon you were eighteen years old. I was twenty and had just left the normal school. You became the wife of Mr. Fergan. All this fell upon me heavily, like a judgment. I do not know how a woman feels at the age of eighteen, but I know that a boy of twenty is something which is not yet fully conscious. I continued to see you, to see you again and again, until one day I realized that I loved you distractedly. When one finds out that such is the circumstance, he is fully aware of his future. I was destined to love you forever, and it was forbidden me to ever love you. Then I looked for a refuge in work, and then in exile. I was going to live three years in the far East, trying to drown my thought, which you occupied, in the sun, in the vast pure sky of those shores. It is not because I felt healed that I returned, but it is because I felt no better. But here, here was something even worse to meet.

IRENE (interrupting him).—I did not want to follow you in the past.

MICHEL.—Now, I have nothing else to tell you, (A pause).

IRENE.—Perhaps there is something missing in woman's soul. As for my part I shall never understand how one is able to leave the person he loves. To me it seems everything would be supportable but the absence. Of course I realize that the first sentiment was not to depart from the one we love so dearly.

MICHEL.—And if I were to tell you that it was a kind of folly which compelled me to run away from you would you not see in that impulsive action a most humble and passionate confession, the most painful proof of my sincerity and my submission?

IRENE.—But if you came to realize that the sacrifice of remaining near me would be still greater—would you not consent? (Silence from MICHEL.) Even if I should ask it?

MICHEL.—I did not say that. I never thought this question would present itself.

IRENE.—Nor did I, until now.

MICHEL.—And now?

IRENE.—It seems to me I cease to be the woman who has ignored herself for such a long time. And at the news that came so suddenly that I was going to lose you again (she begins to shed tears), I felt that I had come to consider you something that belongs to me, I do not know how, but nevertheless very much to me.

MICHEL.—You feel ill. I am very culpable. I beg your pardon. I have not the right to understand what you say, to dare to believe it. It is only I alone who has to suffer. I learned it. You should not do it.

IRENE (supplicating).—Promise that you will go away no more!

MICHEL.—What will become of us?

IRENE.—Ah! whatever the future reserves for us please do not abandon me. Be my providence, my consolation. If you only knew how unhappy I am. No. Remain. Let us share our sorrows.

MICHEL.—You believe me stronger than I am.

IRENE.—I believe you are strong, and I feel that I am strong.

MICHEL.—Yes, but in my love for you, you think that I am capable of wishing anything which shall be in the least injurious to you. But did you never stop to think that the most unspeakable anguish can soil even the purest sentiment?

IRENE.—I do not understand you.

MICHEL.—I see here beside you a man whose rights and caprices can dispose of you.

IRENE (palpitating with shame).—You are not generous.

MICHEL.—I am jealous. (IRENE covers her face.) And you will understand that there will not be room enough for me and the man to whom you belong. (A long pause.)

IRENE.—You have made me feel how great a part of my heart you occupy—and I know also that I cannot belong to you. I ought not to belong to anybody. Help me. Remain to defend me; you will always see my eyes resting sincerely on yours. From this moment I shall forever keep myself for myself. (She extends him her hand, which he very respectfully kisses.) Return as soon as you can—thanks; this evening I feel my soul was born again.

MICHEL.—You have also renewed my life. (Exit Michel through the conservatory.)

Scene VII.

IRENE (alone after watching MICHEL'S departure, falls in an elbow chair, in a pensive attitude).

Scene VIII.

Irene, Fergan. (Fergan returns through the door of his room, left. He is still in his evening dress, except the dressing gown that he has on. He comes in without being noticed by IRENE, until he puts his hands upon the back of the armchair where she sits.)

FERGAN.—Are you asleep?

IRENE (jumping).—You frighten me!

FERGAN (amiably).—I did not mean to. I thought I would not find you in the drawing room at this hour. There is no more fire here. (Feeling her hands.) Your hands are frozen.

IRENE (freeing herself).—Let me alone, please.

FERGAN.—What is the matter?

IRENE.—I thought I should be left alone.

FERGAN.—Your nerves again?

IRENE.—Yes.

FERGAN (very gallant).—That suits you very well. You look still prettier.

IRENE.—Pray, let me alone.

FERGAN.—Are you really angry? But I am determined not to become angry. (He embraces her.)

IRENE (breaking away).—You are stepping on my dress.

FERGAN (whispering in her ear).—Come, it's bedtime.

IRENE.—No!

FERGAN.—Listen!

IRENE (she exits and closes the door abruptly).—Good night!

FERGAN.—No! Irene! (He tries to open, but the lock resists. He shouts furiously).—You shall pay for this.

ACT II

The same setting as in Act I. Daylight. The spring roller blinds of the glazed back door are lowered.

Scene I

Irene, Fergan. (As the curtain rises, FERGAN is ready to drink a cup of coffee at the table at the right. IRENE, seated in an armchair, at the other extremity of the room, reads, obstinately, a book. FERGAN, after manifestations of impatience, closes the book in the hands of his wife, and takes it away with a move of firm resolution.)

FERGAN.—Although you have tried it, I think I can delay no longer from telling you the changes I wish to make, and which I think are absolutely necessary. (IRENE, her arms crossed, listens to him, without looking at him.) It has been a long time, several months, since you mentioned the subject of your health. The state of your nerves, your migrims and your hysterics alarmed me only at first; to-day my opinion is settled as to these imaginary ills, which I deplore you still simulate. I have resolved to adopt extreme measures—to cure you. If life in Paris still continues to disagree with you I shall take advantage of the opportunity to terminate the lease of this residence, whose term of renewal is just approaching. Have you any objection to offer?

IRENE.—None.

FERGAN (with a cunning and spiteful tone).—Then, all that remains for me to do is to consult you as to your choice between two estates that I have in view. They have equal reasons for furnishing you a salutary climate. Both are in the country, far from any town, and receive excellent breezes from the neighboring forests. I would willingly abide by your preference, because you are destined to live at one of these two places more constantly than I, because I shall be compelled to be away frequently. The administration of our estates or some unforeseen events will make this necessary. Such absence will not annoy you whose life is so uniformly arranged. When do you think you will be disposed to examine the details of this question?

IRENE (rising).—Never! I refuse to interfere in whatever you may bring before me regarding the future. We shall never form any plans together. I cannot conceive of the possibility of a common existence between us; you hate me as I hate you.

FERGAN.—It is you who compel me to hate you. You impose upon me, your husband, a situation which is singular, ridiculous, outrageous! Change and I will change too.

IRENE.—This does not depend on me. I feel something which is stronger than I am.

FERGAN.—You were not always like that? Were you?

IRENE.—Why not! At first, as any other girl who marries, I asked nothing else but to love the man whose wife I had become. I tried, I struggled, I tormented my heart, but I could not triumph over myself. I cannot, I cannot! And I swear it from the depth of my heart, I shall never be able. It is from experience that I know I cannot love you at all.

FERGAN (beside himself).—There is not one single word in what you say which is not a violation of your duty and a defiance of all my rights.

IRENE.—I do not utter one word which does not express the sorrow and the truest outburst of my soul.

FERGAN.—Do you realize where this will lead to?

IRENE.—I don't care!

FERGAN.—Then you are a fool! This at least can be cured.

IRENE.—And I hope that you will be wise.

Scene II

The same, PAULINE. The latter comes in just when the quarrel begins.

PAULINE.—My God! My God! Again? Is it then really impossible for you to be of accord?

FERGAN.—I give up. You may listen to her. It's useless to argue with her. Let her talk. I predict that in time you will visit a cell. (Exit.)

Scene III

Irene, Pauline.

PAULINE.—Still quarreling?

IRENE.—Appalling! From week to week, from hour to hour the thing becomes more evil.

PAULINE.—Oh! Still more patience!

IRENE.—The end has come! Yesterday you heard his vague menaces. To-day they are about to be executed. Yes, he wants to take me away from here, isolate me from the rest of the world, sequester me, I do not know where, in prison, with him as my jailor!

PAULINE.—Irene, my poor sister Irene!

IRENE.—Under such circumstances I think nothing better than divorce, or—

PAULINE.—Or what?

IRENE (despairingly).—Out through the door; or, if—jump from the window!

PAULINE.—You frighten me!

IRENE.—Will you desert me? If you are with me there is no time to lose.

PAULINE (embracing her).—You are wicked! But it is for your good that I try to convince you of your error. Your husband is not a villain. Let's see! Do you suspect there is another woman? Perhaps some gratitude is due him.

IRENE.—For what?

PAULINE.—For not being brutal, as many others permit themselves to be; and which would be nothing less than you deserve.

IRENE.—No, Pauline, you cannot with full conscience advise the immolation of this great sentiment,—one that a woman feels above all others!

PAULINE.—And still it is your duty to remain an honest woman.

IRENE.—No! I shall never admit that there is an honest duty under a similar constraint.

PAULINE.—Religion also commands obedience.

IRENE.—No. Religion, though based on abnegation, cannot command such extreme humility to any of its creatures. And in fact, does not religion teach us that chastity is the state nearest to God? I cannot conceive a more miserable sin than to impose complaisance, affection for one's flesh. Yes, this is marriage. People have transformed this lie into a sacred religious institution! To feel and realize the only obstacle to one's happiness, to abominate it with all one's strength, and to be compelled to accept as a pleasure, what you really feel a deadly poison! Ah, the profanation, the shame!

PAULINE.—Irene, you love somebody?

IRENE.—Why?

PAULINE.—Because people do not exalt themselves against something, but for something—

IRENE.—Suppose I do. I would then have another reason to long for my deliverance.

PAULINE.—But, my poor darling, a new husband—for another you will feel the same as you have felt for the first; you, with those caprices and indefinite ideas of yours.

IRENE.—I am no longer the unsophisticated girl who followed your advice more than her own, when you made me marry Robert Fergan. You had your experience. And I obeyed your great and dear authority. It was not I who married ten years ago; it was another that hardly existed then, and of whom I hardly remember anything. But now I feel I am somebody, I have become myself. I know what I want, and what I cannot endure longer. This struggle tears me to pieces, my heart suffocates me, and I have a terrible desire to kill myself!

PAULINE.—Ah! Be quiet. For God's sake; what shall I do, what shall I do?

IRENE.—You know what to do; it is understood, you promised me. It was you who postponed the hour—now it has arrived. You are just in time.

PAULINE.—Then do you really want it?

IRENE.—Go to my husband immediately. Tell him what you think best, be explicit and decisive. I would go, but I have no influence whatever upon him. He would simply treat me once more as a fool. To you he will listen. He always wanted me to have your seriousness, your commonsense. The gravity of your advice would make him reflect.

PAULINE.—Yes, all this is right, but for divorce one should have at least a reason, present a pretext.

IRENE.—It will be enough that my husband be of accord with me; as to the means that we shall adopt, invent, simulate, to obtain the grant which will give me the liberty, we'll see. Oh, tell him anything, until he concedes. Do not allow yourself to be repulsed from the very beginning. Insist, supplicate, frighten him. Go, you can do that—you are afraid? I suppose you have reason to be.

Scene IV.

The Same. A Servant.

THE SERVANT.—Mr. Davernier asks if madam is disposed to receive him.

IRENE.—Ask him to come in. (Exit servant.)

Scene V.

Irene, Pauline.

PAULINE.—What have you to say to Michel in such a moment as this? (With an air of mistrust.) Does he know?

IRENE.—No. Michel does not even suspect what you are going to do. (Very loyally.) But—if he should know? (With anguish) Would you abandon me? (PAULINE is silent a moment, in emotion. Then embraces her sister with infinite tenderness.)

PAULINE.—My poor dear sister! (She goes to FER-GAN.)

Scene VI.

Irene, Michel.

MICHEL.—I beg your pardon for coming here.

IRENE (tenderly).—Yes. (Gravely.) But you should not have done it. You should not do it.

MICHEL.—I know. I promised that to you. I swore that to myself. But, supposing that you love me just as much as I love you.

IRENE.—Let us suppose.

MICHEL.—Then the resolution of not seeing you is more difficult for me to keep than for you.

IRENE.—In what way?

MICHEL.—Because I know if I should not come I should not see you at all, while you, you could always think that I am coming.

IRENE.—And then?

MICHEL.—Then your time flies, hoping I might come, whereas with me, I feel from minute to minute the certitude repeating itself of not seeing you—should I obey your warning.

IRENE.—During those days, so long and so numerous, in which we live apart, so far from one another, have you not thought that our fate can change?

MICHEL.—I dare not wish for anything. Do you think of it, do you?

IRENE.—During your absence I always see your pale forehead, all these dolorous characteristics of a malady that I would like to cure, and which engenders in me a pity still greater than the pity I feel for both of us. I dream of you as being delivered of this air of suffering, as being happy, very happy. When I am not with you, do you not see me—such as I am, and then, such as I could be?

MICHEL.—Yes. There are hours when you appear before me all distracted, full of love, and all unknown as yet by me, and still it is certainly you; yes, you, belonging to me forever, as through a miracle, without even a shadow of remorse or reproach, or even of mourning caused by the death of another!

IRENE.—How similar your soul is to mine! and how our love seems to me greater with all the intensity of our pride! Neither you nor I have conceived of the possibility of a happiness in disloyalty. So, for a long time, without having spoken to you, I have thought of nothing else except to be with you forever.

MICHEL.—What do you mean?

IRENE.—Just at this moment our fate is being decided. Pauline is meeting my husband to ask him whether he is disposed that we give each other legally our rights as well as our liberty.

MICHEL (eagerly).—And do you hope?

IRENE.—I hope he will concede. I could not expect a senseless tenacity from his part against the only imaginable solution. Why, does he not need to-day his liberty just as well as I do? Nobody likes to remain in hell!

MICHEL.—I want to believe that, I believe it.

IRENE.—But, to respond to the great event that now approaches, a great resolution is imposed upon you and me. The project of your going away, which I opposed at first, becomes now a necessity.

MICHEL.—To leave you?

IRENE.—Yes. If there shall be any prospect for me to become your wife—it will probably be after one year. Then you might return—but if I am not able to break my chains (with a sob) we shall see each other no more—

MICHEL.—Irene!

IRENE.—We shall always be apart, each of us in the dignity of our mourning, in the mourning of promised marriages, which never culminate! From the bottom of your soul are we in accord?

MICHEL.—No, I cannot go away from you any more. I have lost that rough energy that sustained me long ago. I could not live without you, without seeing you, or feeling that you are near me. When we are not together, I need the warm recollection of having touched—so—your hands, and the hope that I shall soon bend over your eyes, drink in the sweetness of your words—(he wants to embrace her, to press her close to his bosom, and she shows great emotion.)

IRENE.—Michel, please do not unnerve me, do not take away from me the confidence I have in myself, do not diminish the faith I sincerely have in my honesty. If our happiness is to last from to-day, let me remain all-deserving, let there be no memory to reproach me. Let me! (She withdraws herself quickly.) I am your betrothed!

MICHEL.—I adore you. Your will shall be obeyed.

IRENE (showing much uneasiness).—You have stayed quite long. You must go.

MICHEL.—Without knowing? What will become of me? How could my patience endure the uncertainty?

IRENE.—I shall let you know immediately.

MICHEL.—But if you could not? What if something or some one would interfere or oppose your writing or going out?

IRENE (pointing to the conservatory).—Then wait there. But take care not to be seen. That is all. Go, go; time passes. I am full of anguish. I hear steps approaching. (Michel disappears into the conservatory.)

Scene VII.

Irene, then Pauline. (With attentive ear IRENE goes to the other door, through which PAULINE enters swiftly.)

PAULINE.—Where is Michel? Did he go away? (Almost out of breath.) Don't get angry, don't wonder. I just had a terrible fright, that your husband might meet him—and catch an impression—in his wrath.

IRENE.—Does he refuse?

PAULINE.—He wants to tell you about that. Here he comes now.

Scene VIII.

The Same. Fergan.

FERGAN.—So this is, then, the beautiful plot that you have prepared for me with your sister!

PAULINE.—We did not plot.

FERGAN (to IRENE).—This is the pitiful proposition that you calculated, in which your headaches and nervous spells would culminate?

IRENE.—You know very well that I never played at diplomacy with you. Since I have suffered in being your wife I never dissimulated that. I told you very loyally, very plainly. To-day I tell you again that I am not able to suffer more. And as this depends on you I sent some one to ask you to be kind enough not to cause me further suffering.

FERGAN.—Dear me! You ask of me, of me, who represents the defense of the right and the respect of morals, to accede to you, who represent the revolt against society!

PAULINE (interfering).—Listen, Robert, do not assume the authority of principles. It is not a question here of being right or wrong.

FERGAN.—Is that so?

PAULINE.—As for myself, I tried my hardest to prevent this crisis.

FERGAN.—My compliments.

PAULINE.—But in the name of my tenderness for my sister, and of my very affectionate esteem for you, I adjure you, be generous. Be good, be even weak, if this is necessary at this moment; be nobly human.

FERGAN.—My dear Pauline, your sister had thought necessary to ask you to act as mediator. As for myself, I need none. And I wish to settle our debate once for all by ourselves, between her and myself.

IRENE (to PAULINE).—Do not leave me!

FERGAN.—Do not be afraid. I shall not strike you. Or, at any rate—that depends. (To PAULINE). But I repeat, my dear friend, that if you do not obey me at once you will oblige me to convince your sister that I am master here.

PAULINE.—You are very cruel.

IRENE.—No! (preventing her from passing through the conservatory).—Wait for me in my chamber.

PAULINE (embracing her).—I regret I am helpless to do anything for you. (Exit PAULINE.)

Scene IX.

Irene, Fergan.

IRENE.—You want then to push me to the limit, reduce me to, I don't know what extremity?

FERGAN.—I want simply to bring you to reason.

IRENE.—But what argument do you oppose to my request for a separation? It cannot be that you still love me, after all!

FERGAN.—No, I do not love you any more. I even reproach you for having spoiled my life—and if it were to make it over again—

IRENE.—Then you feel a desire for revenge, to inflict upon me an expiation without end?

FERGAN.—That would be my right. But I have something else to answer, and that is: On the day of our marriage I concluded with you with all my heart a very clear contract that made of me a married man. This contract doubled my situation morally and materially. Of this contract I observed all the clauses; I conformed to its spirit without any hesitation. Today you come deliberately to ask me to lessen, to become a divorced man, a man who sells half of his furniture, who empties half his portfolio, and who remains with a half facade in society. And all these because it pleases you to have no more liking for my company? Well, now confess that my motives are a little more serious than yours. At least such would be the advice of all the family counsels, and all the tribunals on earth.

IRENE.—And I cry out in horror against this dissembling life of marriage, where we are naught to one another, where hatred alone exists. Have we the love which makes one happy through the happiness we give? You talk to me of human respect, of deeds of notary public, and things of that kind.

FERGAN.—But it is you who insisted that your existence in my home should be that of a stranger to me; I treat you therefore as the adverse party, against whom I have titles and signatures, without any other sentiment than that of my rights.

IRENE.—Oh, yes, I admit all the laws which govern fortunes, determine the fate of wealth, assure to one his money, and even somebody else's;—for mine, I do not even think of it—but I do not admit that the law should make a person forever the property of another.

FERGAN.—All you say is nothing but the negation of marriage itself whose first principle is that one cannot leave of his own will!

IRENE.—Now let us talk seriously. There is an instance, very recent too, in which here in France the decision of only one of the spouses would be sufficient to break marriage.

FERGAN.—Who told you that?

IRENE.—The attorney.

FERGAN.—Ah! ah! Have you gone that far already?

IRENE.—In the first years of this century,—a time which perhaps was better than ours, that was the law of married life. As you see, I do not dream of monstrous things, incompatible with the social order. To hate despairingly one's spouse, to hate him to-day more than yesterday, and to-morrow more

than to-day, this was a cause won for divorce. And I think that should be the supreme reason. I do not see another as worthy as that!

FERGAN (contemptuously).—The new law has not even admitted the divorce by mutual consent!

IRENE.—Eh! When a husband and a wife are capable of understanding a divorce, they would have no more necessity of it! It is for those who are incapable of any accord, even in that, that the divorce has been invented.

FERGAN.—Do whatever you please; all the ways are closed before you.

IRENE.—I shall find one.

FERGAN.—None! I do not impose services, nor serious injuries upon you. I am faithful, and as far as I know, no word of condemnation was ever uttered against me. Without these three grounds, and against a husband such as I am, you cannot ask anything of the tribunals.

IRENE.—I can do and shall do much that it will be you who will ask to be released from me!

FERGAN.—Nothing!

IRENE.—Nevertheless, suppose I create for you a situation which shall be intolerable?

FERGAN.—You shall not triumph over my character.

IRENE.—We will see.

FERGAN.—Whatever grief you would bring upon me I would not answer except by keeping you more and more under my domination.

IRENE.—I shall leave home, I shall run away.

FERGAN.—And I will bring you back with gendarmes. (IRENE suddenly springs up.) I have the right to do it.

IRENE (outraged).—And if the revolt should make of me a woman such as no man of honor could keep in his house?

FERGAN (unyielding).—I shall keep you! It pleases me to not give you your liberty. Even my pleasure gives me a legitimate right to oppose yours. I shall keep you and shall not let you go!

IRENE.—Oh! and they say there are no more slaves in the world! And still I must be a slave because I have a husband! There is no eternal oath before God any longer, because a sister nowadays may leave the convent, and yet there is one eternal oath, of a wife to her husband! No, this is above me; I do not accept it, I will not endure it!

FERGAN.—Little by little you will become accustomed to it. Mark well! I am more than ever resolute about the reform of our habits, of which I advised you. We shall leave Paris. I am going to procure for you a calmer atmosphere, which will undoubtedly do you the necessary good; and then I will also profit by a little rest.

IRENE (lost).—Is this your last word?

FERGAN.—Yes.

IRENE (imploringly with joined hands).—You will not be pitiless. You will not desire my ruin.

FERGAN (repulsing her).—Ah, I pray, do not be foolish! When you would not yield to me I spared you from my supplications. My decision is now firmly made.

IRENE (kneeling).—Mercy! Mercy! Save me!

FERGAN.—My will is resolute. Arrange your toilet. Later on, some day, I am convinced you yourself will praise me for having kept you in the regular way. (Fergan goes out through the door which leads to his chamber.)

Scene X.

Irene (alone) then Michel. (IRENE remains for a moment in an attitude of despair. Then, as if blinded, she goes towards the conservatory, wherefrom MICHEL springs upon her and receives her in his arms.

IRENE.—Ah! You! You! Do whatever you please with me.

ACT III

The action takes place in the drawing room of a castle out in the country. In the back a porch which opens into a park. Doors at right and left.

Scene I.

Fergan, Valanton.

(As the curtain rises, FERGAN is busy arranging some volumes on his book shelves. He has the aspect of a mature man. VALANTON, who has also grown old, enters through the right, carrying with him a fishing outfit.)

VALANTON.—Are you not going with me? Are you busy?

FERGAN.—You see, my dear fellow, it is I who continues to be the hostess of this home. Ever since we came here, almost ten years ago, I have never been able to persuade Irene to give the least attention to the little arrangements of the interior.

VALANTON.—To be sure! But you must admit that it was not for her pleasure she came to reside in this country place.

FERGAN.—Yes, but after ten years!

VALANTON (taking a seat in order to arrange a fishing line).—Oh, the women; they can continue to be that way for a long time. People have even written special plays on this very theme. They had their boudoir a century before men came to have the smoking-room.

FERGAN.—But you should not believe that Irene shows at present any ill will. I attribute her neglect of the house to a little fault in her character. But, thank God, I do not complain of her. We have come to an end, once for all, of that horrible time, when I certainly was compelled to make her feel an iron hand.

VALANTON.—In an iron glove.

FERGAN.—Undoubtedly. But this way I accomplished the mission I had to.

VALANTON.—Certainly, first the mission towards yourself.

FERGAN (with satisfaction).—Especially towards her. I assured her the existence of an honest, honorable woman. With all her exuberances of ideas, there is no telling of what she was capable, had I allowed her the direction of her actions. I tell you, I congratulate myself every day for having insisted sternly on that subject. In this retreat the physical condition of my wife has rapidly improved. She has become a mother. Her sentiments have modified. At last she understands life as one should understand it, as something which in fact is not so very bad, and in which we needed nothing more but to live a good life near one another.

VALANTON.—Oh, evidently. In marriage there is no strife except during the first fifteen or twenty years. After that everything is serene.

FERGAN.—Notwithstanding, this does not exclude the possibility of questions arising now and then which do not pass so easily. As, for example, just now I am going to settle a difficulty for which I foresee I shall need to summon all my courage.

VALANTON (with an air of consternation).—Are you going to renew the strife with your wife?

FERGAN.—Yes. A rather serious one, I am afraid. The trouble is in regard to the instruction of our Rene, and my wife seems not to be disposed to teach him as he should be taught.

VALANTON.—Oh! my dear friend, will you not wait until Pauline and I have finished our sojourn at your home?

FERGAN.—Impossible. The opening of the schools takes place today. I have sent word to the college of St. Christophe, fifteen miles from here, that Rene will sleep there to-night. On various occasions Irene was so hostile to the idea of parting with the lad that I preferred to put off the discussion until the last moment.

VALANTON.—What? Have you not even obtained her consent?

FERGAN.—She always refused it in the same nervous manner that we know she had a long time ago. Then it seemed preferable to me to keep silent on this subject in order to save

her a priori excitement and superfluous trepidation. In fact is not this right? The crisis of the separation was inevitable. Now, as you see, it is better to reason with Irene but once, at just the moment of the execution of what I think I must do.

VALANTON.—Hm! Hm! This may not be an easy matter. (Ready to go away with his outfit.) At least try to have the reconciliation made before I return. I go to install myself with my fishing lines in a little corner that I discovered.

FERGAN.—What kind of fish do you catch?

VALANTON (modestly).—Oh, I do not exclude any.

FERGAN.—But do you catch any?

VALANTON.—None.

FERGAN.—That is because you do not know your business.

VALANTON.—It is the fishes that ignore theirs! They pass, they look, they scent, but do not bite. They do not know even how to play with the cork. They are sad—like all this country of stones and ravines. Well, good by. (Exit through the left.)

Scene II.

Fergan, Irene and Pauline.

(The two women enter through the door of the porch. IRENE has gray hair, her appearance austere and her habiliments somber. PAULINE carries an armful of dainty grasses and water flowers.)

PAULINE.—Ah, how tired we are!

FERGAN.—Did you go very far?

PAULINE.—We began with the woods, then arrived down at the field; we wanted to go out from the park and return through the hamlet.

FERGAN (with the certainty of a landowner aware of everything).—Yes, but the hedge was an obstacle on your way.

PAULINE.—Not at all. The path was cleared of its bushes. A peasant woman was just going in to wash some clothes in the river. The wife of a neighbor—wasn't it, Irene?

FERGAN.—This is a little too much. (To IRENE.) And what did you say to her?

IRENE.—I asked her how her child was getting along.

FERGAN.—And that is all?

IRENE.—No. I gave her what she needed for the medicine.

FERGAN (taking his hat).—Well, I—I shall go and ask her to be kind enough to leave there.

PAULINE.—Oh! I should never have expected that of you! At least do not abuse her. She is a very poor woman.

FERGAN.—Well, has she any right to my property?

PAULINE.—Do you never get tired of always insisting on your rights?

FERGAN.—Were all the people as I am, society would do better. I can guarantee that. (Exit.)

Scene III.

Irene and Pauline.

PAULINE.—You should have detained your husband.

IRENE.—He does what he wants, and I do all in my power to oppose his will.

PAULINE.—So neither the past years nor the situations that changed with age modified your attitude toward him?

IRENE.—No!

PAULINE.—But you do not quarrel any more, do you?

IRENE.—At present between us there is only one quarrel that is possible; and this we have in our hearts as yet unexpressed.

PAULINE.—And what is that quarrel?

IRENE.—The education of Rene.

PAULINE. I think he finds your maternal tenderness a little exaggerated.

IRENE.—Oh, yes, I adore my son. It is to make him live that I renounced death. And, if I am still alive, it is for this child, through this child, from whom nobody would be able to separate me. Ah! this little unquiet life, his little sad soul, which it seems to me is made but of my sighs; never shall I consent to trust him out of this home to teachers, strangers, others!

PAULINE.—Has your husband spoken to you in regard to this?

IRENE.—Yes, several times his explanations and insistences on this question have carried me to the lowest depths of despair. Until the last few days I trembled secretly, fearing that he may try to put his intention into action. But this year, as you see, he neglected to pay any attention to date when colleges begin, and he did not renew his efforts. He who is so resolute in everything! One would say that in this respect he sees in me a creature guarding his little one. And in this he sees correctly; I would dispute it with him desperately, even to the death!

PAULINE.—Poor sister! I realize that you live only for your child. But were you not destined to live your own life? Sometimes I think of what might have been if you had married the other; and I realize that you certainly were not marked for happiness.

IRENE (thoughtfully).—Who knows?

PAULINE.—Oh! no! certainly not! Your life would have been somber, rigorous and extremely painful.

IRENE.—Why?

PAULINE.—I am thinking of what sorrow you would have been condemned to endure afterwards if you had realized your dreams of long ago; you have never told me about them, but I have guessed them.

IRENE.—I do not understand you.

PAULINE.—My God, I should not recall this to you. But I have thought of it often, very often.

IRENE.—Will you please explain?

PAULINE.—Why should you not confess it now? Is it not true that you intended to marry Michel Davernier?

IRENE.—(turning aside).—Perhaps.

PAULINE.—There! Ah! how many times have I thought that the worst of your sufferings would have been to lose the happiness after you had gained it!

IRENE.—Then the only thing they should have done was to have granted me my share of happiness. As to the rest, I was willing to endure all.

PAULINE.—No, this is not so. Then you would have truly known the depths of human sorrow and suffering; when, ascended to the greatest height of bliss with your beloved, you would have fallen suddenly,—he dead, in your arms!

IRENE.—Had I married Michel he would not be dead now! I could have preserved him from death. I could have been there at any moment to care for him with love, and cure him with caresses. I could have saved him from what in his life without a home destroyed him little by little! solitude, anxiety, imprudence, all that one does not know—(as she would talk to herself)—all that one cannot know!

PAULINE.—Pfff! A consumptive, son of a consumptive—

IRENE (agitated).—Keep still!

PAULINE.—What is it?

IRENE (restraining herself).—Nothing. The dreadful thought of death! (Evasively.) The recollection. Why did you talk to me of that?

Scene IV.

The same, Rene, Fergan.

RENE (enters running).—Mamma, mamma!

IRENE (opens her arms).—Rene! My treasure! my little one so weak! Come, let me embrace you (she entwines him) that I may see you looking better! Oh! become strong (the boy babbles) and noisy (he wants to free himself), even bad, like a good little rascal.

RENE.—Papa promised me that he was going to take me in his dog cart.

IRENE.—No, sir, no! Don't you know that you are not allowed to go out without me?

RENE.—Oh!

IRENE.—First of all, just see, you are wet.. What foolishness have you been doing? When I left you, you were going to write your lessons with mademoiselle.

Scene V.

The same, Fergan.

FERGAN.—This proves that mademoiselle ceased for some time to have any influence upon the lad.

IRENE.—You must change your clothes from head to foot.

FERGAN (raising his shoulders).—Tut, tut, tut!

PAULINE (taking RENE by the hand, to IRENE).—Leave him with me. I am going upstairs. I shall give him a scolding, like all the aunties know how to scold. (With a feint of gravity.) That will not make him laugh (tenderly) nor cry. (Exit PAULINE and RENE.)

Scene VI.

Irene, Fergan.

FERGAN (a bit embarrassed).—I want to discuss with you the education of Rene.

IRENE (frightened).—Why to-day?

FERGAN.—Because the matter cannot be delayed any longer.

IRENE.—Why?

FERGAN.—He is almost ten years of age.

IRENE.—Well?

FERGAN.—Well, up to this time I gladly recognized that it was best to let you have authority over him. There are thousands of primary cares which only the mother understands perfectly. I think you will find me right in that. Although disapproving of your excess of attention, I never crossed you.

IRENE.—And now?

FERGAN.—Now, as our son grows to be a little man, it is not pleasing to me that you should make a young lady of him.

IRENE.—Then why not tell me how to rear him?

FERGAN.—I am no more competent than you are in the details of education. I only know that Rene is in need to-day of a broader instruction. We should not limit him only to that which is given in the family.

IRENE.—If you think I alone am not sufficient, let us take a teacher, or if necessary several teachers.

FERGAN.—No, that is not the point. We should thus render a very bad service to the boy. When of age he will find himself unaccustomed to discipline, to emulation. He would have no self-confidence; and these things can never be acquired except in a college.

IRENE.—Then we stand again at the vital question. How many times must I tell you that this will be a murder, a real murder, to take Rene from my care?

FERGAN.—Let us forego inordinate imagining. Let us be serious. Our son will never work well enough at our side. You love him too much in a very passionate manner. You will never know how to be severe enough.

IRENE (indignantly).—And you would like to hire people to be severe with him? A poor little child that I his mother did not dare to believe she would be able to rear? But don't you see that he is always in need of some one to take care of him? At the slightest indisposition he coughs. At times I rise during the night and find him in perspirations which frighten me.

FERGAN.—Well, this is just exactly what angers me, and what I find quite ridiculous. It is your luxury of precautions that does not give him enough sunshine and good fresh air. The little gentleman, I think, will be better off when he is less spoiled.

IRENE.—My son will never leave me.

FERGAN.—He will follow my example. At his age I had already been two years in a boarding school. He will do as the children of all our neighbors, as the children of all the people do. He will come here Sunday; I shall go to see him. You might go and see him whenever you want—and when the condition of our horses will permit it.

IRENE.—Rene is sick, I tell you, very sick, his life is in doubt. Oh! I know it! The doctors have told me.

FERGAN.—What doctors?

IRENE.—All. All that I could consult in the neighborhood.

FERGAN.—Did you do that? Without my knowledge?

IRENE.—Yes.

FERGAN.—This is absurd. And what kind of sickness did they find our son has?

IRENE.—They recognize that —

FERGAN.—What?

IRENE.—That only my love would be able to preserve him, to save him, through a daily regime and by an every moment treatment.

FERGAN.—Enough empty phrases! When somebody is sick his malady has a name. Please be precise.

IRENE.—How you torment me! Don't you see how overwrought I am?

FERGAN.—Oh! the doctors could easily realize what you want them to do. You brought accommodating diagnostics. And then, how is it? You are a healthy woman; I, by Jove! I have a sound body. Is it with such antecedents that sickly children are born? (IRENE bends her head during these words, which embarrass her.) And then we shall see how our son has profited from his first year away from home.

IRENE.—Never.

FERGAN.—What?

IRENE.—You will never convince me on this point. I shall never give him up!

FERGAN.—Well, then, let us finish immediately this useless discussion. Will you please prepare the necessary baggage for Rene?

IRENE.—For what?

FERGAN.—I take him with me to the college—

IRENE.—Will you? Do you dare?

FERGAN.—In the course of one hour I want to leave.

IRENE.—Oh! this will never happen. It is the life of my son that I defend against your horrible error. I shall keep him if it were necessary day and night in my arms.

FERGAN.—I see you are exactly as I knew you long ago. You compel me now to exert all the power as a father that I exerted once as a husband!

IRENE.—Don't speak of what you have done. It was too great a triumph for you, that you should try again. I bend my head with still more hatred in my heart. I hid my face, and since then I have never looked you straight in the face. But to-day it is not your wife who stands before you, and whom you oblige to defy you; it is the mother, a mother whom nothing will move.

FERGAN.—You don't know the rights of the mother.

IRENE (with a fierce contempt).—It is not the mothers who abuse their rights! We women feel them. They assume form with us just as the child forms within us, and our eyes see those rights growing, bound to our own beings.

FERGAN.—Once more I say I am right by law, in spite of your utopian ideas.

IRENE.—Oh! this dreadful word comes forth again. You also, I think, are playing with my son's life, just as you did when you destroyed mine, without any remorse, with these eyes of yours as imperturbable as an executioner in accomplishing his duty!

FERGAN.—You may say whatever you please, nothing will deter me from disposing of our son.

IRENE (in a tragic hesitation).—Do you think I do not know what to offer as an argument?

FERGAN.—Our son belongs to me more than to you, according to law.

IRENE (out of breath).—That is not right.

FERGAN.—In spite of you, it is.

IRENE.—No, no!

FERGAN.—Go see to his departure.

IRENE.—Listen!

FERGAN (going away).—No, I will order the horses hitched.

IRENE (barring his way).—Before God, this child is only mine!

FERGAN (pushing her back).—He is mine, I am his father!

IRENE (violently, with a great decisive move).—You are not his father!

FERGAN (stupefied).—What? are you becoming a fool?

IRENE (almost restored to serenity).—No, I become frank, open.

FERGAN (suffocated).—You say that? Do you know what you say?

IRENE.—I know.

FERGAN.—You want to mislead me. This phrase. Unbelievable. This outrage. This is your last recourse. Talk rapidly, but talk.

IRENE.—You ask for proofs? Well, I'll give them to you. Do you remember I closed the door of my chamber against you? I tried all in every possible manner to go out of your way. You took me in servitude.

FERGAN (with a fierce voice).—And then?

IRENE.—Through what sentiment do you think I could again become your wife?

FERGAN (beginning to understand).—Oh!

IRENE.—I had my secret. To keep my child safe I kept the truth hidden, just as to have him now I speak!

FERGAN (rushing upon her).—You contemptible harlot!

IRENE (at the door bell).—I shall call your servants.

FERGAN (mastering himself).—The scandal! In fact, I know now that no infamy could have kept you.

IRENE.—It is your pitiless logic which compelled me to lie—to do evil. And it is I who do not pardon now.

FERGAN.—That man? Did I ever meet him?

IRENE.—Perhaps.

FERGAN.—What is his name?

IRENE.—I shall never say.

FERGAN.—Did he come here?

IRENE.—No, near here.

FERGAN.—I cannot realize how you came to see him.

IRENE.—Nor do I.

FERGAN.—Did you see him often?

IRENE.—! ! !

FERGAN.—Do you still see him?

IRENE (hiding from him the sorrow of her answer).—No; it is a long time since he went away, very far, forever—

FERGAN.—And don't you think it is abominable that the son of your lover should be my son, and must remain always my son?

IRENE.—Who says so? It is your own law, which said that in spite of me, in spite of all, I shall remain your wife!

FERGAN.—I never could have suspected you. I knew you as my enemy, but—(tears rise in his eyes, because of his vanquished pride)—but I honored you as such.

IRENE.—Everybody makes war according to his means. You employed all your might; I had naught to use against you (with a soft voice), but my weakness!

FERGAN.—I did nothing but stand firmly for my rights.

IRENE.—Nature has her rights also.

FERGAN (maliciously).—At least haste made you very imprudent. By exempting me from my duties of father you cannot take away my authority. You have betrayed this child with whom I can do whatever I please.

IRENE.—Now, after I have told you everything, you can do nothing.

FERGAN.—Is that so?

IRENE (with authority).—Nothing which would not be a cowardice, an impossible vengeance.

FERGAN.—The worse!

IRENE.—No. I dared make this revelation because I wanted to get my son back forever, and free him from your very polite and obliging sentiments of a man pure and simply civilized.

FERGAN (menacing).—And if I become a savage now?

Scene VII.

The Same. Rene.

IRENE.—Rene! My God!

RENE (going toward FERGAN, between him and IRENE.) Don't we go out soon, papa?

FERGAN (agitated).—Hush!

IRENE (embracing him).—Yes, hush!

FERGAN.—Send him away, that we may say all we have yet to say.

IRENE (to RENE).—Go and wait for me with Aunt Pauline.

RENE.—Why did papa cry? He never cries.

IRENE (willing to make him go, with a soft voice).—Go on!

RENE.—How is it that you don't cry, too, you who always cry—when you think that nobody is seeing you? Oh, I have seen you often, I—

IRENE (embracing him).—Ah! my dear, no more tears.
(Accompanying him.) Go, go. (Exit RENE.)

Scene VIII.

FERGAN.—The child is now your own—yes! I leave him to you. You may do with him whatever you choose. You were right when you said that I cannot do him any injustice. (Weakening). It is enough that I realize that I do not love him. (With authority.) You will take him with you. You shall go away with him.

IRENE.—I shall not go away.

FERGAN.—What?

IRENE.—I shall never consent to be cast out. For my son I shall sacrifice nothing of his regular situation and of the consideration which is attached to his legal—birth!

FERGAN.—I shall compel you then.

IRENE.—No.

FERGAN.—It was you who pleaded so ardently for divorce. It is I who ask it now.

IRENE.—I shall not accept it now. My youth has gone, my hopes lost, my future as a woman is dead. I refuse to change the course of my life, to budge, to move out. I have but the will to remain till the last where I am and what I am.

FERGAN.—And you expect me to support you?

IRENE.—You should. You have nothing against me except my confession.

FERGAN.—Would you deny it?

IRENE.—Would you dare to make it public? (A pause.)

FERGAN (annihilated).—Then what do you want me to do, live face to face with you always? Do you expect me to endure such a life?

IRENE.—You have to endure the same life that you have imposed upon me until today. We have come to the same shore. Now make yourself comfortable, so that you can feel the weight and carry it also. It is quite a long while that I have carried it alone.

IRENE.—There is no justice!

IRENE.—There is only one, of a common unhappiness.

FERGAN.—You are guilty and I am innocent.

IRENE.—We are both unhappy. And at the bottom of misfortune there are only equals.

THE END.

M R S . D O T .

A Play Without a Cause.

Few plays of the past season have been so utterly unworthy of technical discussion as "Mrs. Dot" by W. Somerset Maugham. The piece was doubtless designed as the lighter vein of dramatic composition, but the thing is so fearfully shallow it hardly fits the definition of farce or comedy. Considerable common sense would have to be injected to give it even the substance of high class comic opera.

We have come to measure all manuscripts worthy of the name by the standards of human life. If we encountered such a simpering flirt in real form as "Mrs. Dot" is portrayed to be, we would condemn her as an artificial idiot. The character is without motive for the reason that the Play is without Cause. And here we draw a lesson from negative qualities. Conflict creates character.

Drama is not primarily built upon character. There must be a Cause and this Cause creates Conflict and Conflict is the dominant key in play Construction. But who can imagine strong situation without relatively forceful character to enact it? Potent Dramatic Conflict, then, is the thing to strive for. Create this and a wealth of personality permeates your Play as inevitably as the apple falls to the ground.

A M A K E R O F M E N .

Alfred Sutro's One-Act Drama.

This little narrative from the pen of a noted playwright is positive evidence of the crying need of scientific study of Drama. If Mr. Sutro understood the anatomy of the creature he is trying to create it would be impossible for him to commit so gross a blunder.

A husband rebels at his belated promotion in a bank. A younger man attains the honor. The wife consoles him with the fact that she is content with her children, the product of their great and wonderful love. He becomes reconciled. Is this a Play?

Is it a Conflict between human wills or is this bit of recitation a mere psychological illustration of the force of suggested thought? The drama takes place in the husband's mind. He is cajoled out of the blues by the mental suggestion of the wife. Compare this Plot with the contending forces that go to make up the struggle in any real Play and you will see that "A Maker of Men" is mere chatter.

A GENTLEMAN FROM MISSISSIPPI.

The Stuff That Real Plays Are Made Of.

It would be a sad blow to the advocates of Dramatic Science if a play could enjoy the long run accorded "A Gentleman from Mississippi" and still be a worthless thing structurally! The frank endorsement of public opinion would tend to offset Science. But this is not the case. Public opinion and Science Concur. The Play has traits of master workmanship. It has a Theme. The authors have something to say. The simple little sermon of their story ranks the Play among the first.

A Southern Senator of untested moral fibre encounters the customary bribery of the legislature. To overflow his cup of temptation the financial affairs of his family will be hopelessly wrecked if he does not yield to the lure of graft. He resists! This is the legitimate story of the Play. The triumph of Good in a rugged heart!

The type of the Play is extremely modern and drama throbs while the valid portion of the Play performs. But unfortunately there are foreign features of construction that hark back to the old school situation of complication for complication sake. If the Plot were confined to this excellent story and concluded when this story is told we would have one of the strongest specimens of modern playwriting extant.

But the Play is not allowed to stop when Conflict ceases. At the end of Act III the verdict is practically rendered but the authors proceed with a fourth to stretch out something we already know and in their helplessness to quit a thing already finished they "ring in" spurious episode. This results in disunity and the Plot ingredients of several other Play possibilities.

Think of marrying off this honest old codger to a sophisticated Washington widow after the sanctifying effect he has had on us! Much of the melodramatic plottiness of Plot could be ripped out to the benefit of the reality of illusion. The traditional stage-made villain could well be relegated to the age that knew him intimately.

THE GIRL HE COULDN'T LEAVE
BEHIND HIM.

Devoid of Sound Sense.

While farce is not supposed to be of a serious texture there must nevertheless be a shadow of sense in the Conditions of its Action or there results nothing upon which the audience can rest its supposition or hypothesis. To persuade us that any married man would feel obliged to keep his word with a Spanish dancer to the effect that he is to devote one day a year to said dancer, is hardly within the province of the loosest fantasy. The husband, through such inane conduct loses all claim to interest, let alone sympathy, and the Conditions of the Action being lame, the Cause limps and the Conclusion languishes.

The production should be a lesson to those who have not learned that this brand of vapid farce is obsolete. Its failure was foredoomed! There is as much difference between "The Girl He Couldn't Leave Behind Him" and a farce like "Seven Days" as between "Enchained" and "Chinatown Charlie." It may also be true that the American audience is sick of marital infidelity and masculine depravity. At least they know the difference instinctively, between true dramatic action and old time "rough-house" horseplay.

For lifeless, unconvincing types of character this cast of fourteen takes the jelly cake. And even the negative qualities of structure are so remote from rational standards that it would be futile to discuss them in parallel. The fact that William Collier directed the thing is an added evidence that the player knoweth not the Play.

TWO THEATRICAL SEASONS COMPARED

EVENTS IN PRODUCING THEATRES.

	1908-9	1909-10
Number of new plays	74	102
Number of new musical comedies	29	26
Number of revived plays	34	38
Number of revived musical comedies	8	4
Shakespearian revivals	11	13
 Totals	 156	 183

CLASSIFICATION OF PLAYS.

Serious and sentimental dramas	23	37
Melodramas	19	26
Romantic comedies	4	10
Light comedies	16	10
Tragedies	2	3
Farces	10	16
 Totals	 74	 102

SOURCES OF NEW PLAYS

Original plays	59	74
Adapted from foreign plays	9	15
Dramatized from novels or stories	6	13
 Totals	 74	 102

NATIONALITY OF AUTHORS

By native authors	56	63
By foreign authors	18	39
 Totals	 74	 102

NEW MUSICAL COMEDIES

By native composers	26	18
By foreign composers	3	8
 Totals	 29	 26

A study of the foregoing table may assist the dramatist in determining what kind of play to write. The serious and sentimental drama appears to hold the record for popularity. The new author's chances are indicated by the 102 new plays projected.

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Plays of the New Season

It is with deep regret that we find no one example in the Plays of the opening season that is actually worthy of praise. Several half-hearted efforts have received the approval of New York Critics but the fact remains that there is not a specimen among those thus far produced that will rank with Fitch or Walter. The great majority of the new arrivals seem designed for that hilarious style of stage management familiar to farce or musical comedy. Authors are temporarily laboring under the delusion that boisterous activity is related to Dramatic Action little heeding the fact that the most placid happenings on the stage frequently contain the liveliest essence of that subtle force. Nothing is more certain of remedy than an abundance of this tickling in the ribs for while the sensation may delight the infant mind of an audience momentarily, a continued application of the author's knuckles in the region of the wishbone ceases to be a source of ecstatic joy. Welcome to the avalanche of fun forcers born of a commercial effort to fill the overbuilt theatre situation! For despite the praise of critics these mirth producers are failing one by one and before many days it is safe to say the legitimate brand of drama as advocated by our friend Belasco will again hold sway. The class who attend the comic opera are hardened to this snickering sort of silliness but when the playgoer is confronted with horseplay farce put up in the shape of drama he is apt to complain of false pretense.

Here's to the Art of Playwriting, conspicuous for its absence!

BELASCO ON TECHNIQUE.

His Advice to the Novitiate.

"The Dramatist's profession, MORE THAN ANY OTHER, calls for preparation, for study."

"The greater number of these hastily enlisted aspirants have NOT EVEN AN ELEMENTARY conception of the qualifications requisite for one who is going to make a business of Playwriting."

"The demands of the Drama upon its creators are greater than those of any other Art."

"Above all he should study! This is the one thing at which the would be dramatist most often balks. He will not study. Ninety-five out of a hundred do not seem even to feel the necessity for study."

"If I could use but one word in which to sum up the advice of which young playwrights seem to stand more in need, the word I should choose is: CONCENTRATE!"

—From the Sunday Magazine.

Mr. Belasco goes on to say that of the many thousands of Plays he examines the greater portion of them are rendered valueless from a producing standpoint through their lack of concentration. He cautions the raw hand against utilizing two or three heroes, heroines, or villains, all more or less equal importance. He advises singling out "one couple from among the characters" and concentrating upon them the attention, interest and affection of the audience ruthlessly thrusting into the background any figure that steps forward and threatens to disturb the priority of interest the leading characters enjoy.

This is a left hand method of stating a very important dramatic truth. We say left hand for Mr. Belasco has not said exactly what he means. With the stage manager's conscience uppermost he is trying to pay tribute to that magnificent Law of Drama called UNITY. If the Dramatist's conscience predominated, however, he would see this thing as the Unity of the Action in the Play and not any Unity of Actors.

Let the amateur writer concentrate his attention upon the characters instead of the structure of the Play and you would soon find an elaborate TALK between two people. The better admonition might be to concentrate upon ONE PLAY. But to make this precaution clear it would be necessary for the student to learn the real meaning of the term Play and this is impossible without careful investigation of the One Specific Conflict that constitutes every Play possibility. The more this Conflict is concentrated the narrower becomes the group of principal characters naturally. The "one couple from among the characters" is thus acquired in a truly dramatic and technical fashion. In other words: "The Play's the Thing." Build the Play and the characters will take care of themselves. A Play of Unity will contain characters that concentrate the interest, desires and sympathies of the audience.

The five injunctions above quoted would be valuable precepts for the tyro. If you, dear reader, fail to see the infinite truth in any of these, have a copy made to decorate your study walls, and con them over till you recognize their value.

HERVIEU'S REPLY TO OUR CRITICISM.

FURTHER STUDY OF THE PLAY "ENCHAINED."

Paris, August 6, 1910.

Dear Sir:

I received your admirable letter and magazine at the very minute I was starting on a voyage and am answering hurriedly after taking notice of the critical observations which precede your translation of "Les Tenailles."

I found these observations highly satisfactory as a whole. The two Scenes which are judged less favorably are Scenes of exposition. The first in Act I and the first in Act III, which takes place ten years later. These two require a few minutes of information for the audience. The exposition is always slower than the action, and seems longer; but we could not dispense with this even if the spectators could guess what is going to happen, and in such case, the theatrical intrigue, would not excite in them any further curiosity.

Please accept the expression of my confraternal compliments.

PAUL HERVIEU.

This is an exceedingly interesting letter for it represents the view of one of the foremost Dramatists of that Nation which has long been the criterion on technique. If what M. Hervieu states of "Exposition" is correct, then the highest American authority on Dramatic Principle is sadly at fault. But let us examine into this thing called Exposition and weigh its worth.

Brander Matthews speaks of Exposition as an introduction of the several characters, information as to their past lives and as to their present desires. Alfred Hennequin defines Exposition as follows: "It is necessary, at the beginning of the Play, to put the spectator in possession of all the facts necessary to a perfect comprehension of the story as it unrolls before him." Neither of these statements may convey Hervieu's idea of "Exposition" but they will serve our purpose in assailing this notion that explanatory matter should precede the actual Play. For we hold that this theatrical tradition is a violation of art and not a dramatic principle in any sense of the word. We shall endeavor to show in the instance of the two Scenes in question how the substance of "Exposition" should be implied along with Plot progress and not constitute a separate entity.

Scene I, Act I.

The pet weakness of Ibsen was this "Exposition" idea of bringing in the past lives of his characters. He was a past master at this stunt and for that reason is not a highly profitable model for technique. The Play that most nearly approaches perfection is undoubtedly the one in which the Conflict is ALL of the present with absolutely no encumbrance of ancient history. This is the case with Ibsen's "An Enemy to the People" and Shakespeare's "Macbeth." If we see the Plot unfold before us on the stage and are not called upon to listen to the story of the lives of any of the characters we naturally concentrate our attention more readily upon Plot. Our energies are not wasted.

Now in studying the first Scene in Act I we note that nothing comes across the footlights that the eye can reach. It is all for the ear. The past ten years of married life is reported. Wherever this historical tendency prevails there is bound to be a lapse of interest. It results from the author's attempt to speak through the medium of his characters in place of motivating them to say the inevitable thing.

Hervieu says that "The theatrical intrigue would not excite further curiosity" in the souls of the spectators. Would there be more curiosity or less curiosity if we actually saw the husband in this first Scene and learned the relation, first hand, between husband and wife? There would be more curiosity—there would be a hundredfold more interest.

Nothing HAPPENS in this first Scene. Some intimation is made of what is ABOUT TO HAPPEN but this is TALKED into the audience and in no way becomes evidence in possession of the spectator as would a direct presentation by means of a quarrel between the two principals concerned. The shortest distance between two points in a straight line. This is true of Play and Audience. If we permit interest to take a circuitous route we are not making the shortest distance. It is like incidents in every day life. What you see of the happenings of events becomes much MORE REAL than what is told you.

Scene I, Act III.

The construction of this Scene is much the same as Scene I, Act I. It takes place between one principal and one disinterested character. Nothing is said because it has to be said but merely "To put the spectator in possession of all the facts necessary" after a lapse of ten years between Acts.

The chief facts that we get from this Scene are that Fergan is still the tyrant and that having apparently triumphed in the

matter of subjugating his wife has now transposed his means of torment to her separation from a ten year old son. Hervieu tells us that "even if the spectators could guess what is going to happen we could not dispense with exposition—the theatrical intrigue would not excite in them any further curiosity."

This is almost equivalent to saying the audience cannot interpret what they see, that they must be told beforehand what is about to be pictured. M. Hervieu does not believe this. He knows that the audience is never so flattered as when they are allowed to divine (As they think) the progress of the Play as it actually transpires before their eyes. If, without further notice, the curtain rises upon a mother with gray hair and a ten year old son, it is surely not necessary to TELL the audience that ten years have elapsed.

If we see the actual preparation for the separation of mother and child and learn from the father's cautioning that this cruel disruption is to be a surprise to her, the spectators actually possess the information, first hand, and the bugbear of "Exposition" is eliminated. Is there any loss of curiosity? Is there any loss of Drama? To say this would be strangling the very essence of drama itself. For there is no keener interest possible than that aroused in the souls of a theatre audience by means of the visual thing before them!

Much the same criticism applies to Scenes II and III of this Act. They are not valid Scenes because they leave the anvil when the iron is shaping. Scene II gives an irrelevant instance of the husband's further tyranny, but have we not had sufficient evidence of this within the bounds of legitimate material? Scene III goes to TELL the audience, (and with much effort) of Irene's past with Michel. This information could be deftly woven into the momentary progress of Plot and be brought out, as it should be, in a Scene between the only two principals concerned—husband and wife.

Next Discussion.

In the January Dramatist we will analyse the Unity and Disunity of "Enchained." Look sharp for breaches of this principal. It is only by cultivating your powers of analysis that you will become an efficient critic of your own work.

M O T H E R .

Based Upon the Third Law of Nature.

There are three cardinal Laws of Nature: Self Preservation, Reproduction and Preservation of Offspring. The nearer any author comes to any one of the fundamental Themes of

life the more certain is he of universal acceptance by an audience. From a review of these Laws and the Play we are discussing it will be seen that Mr. Goodman has availed the Third Law: The preservation of offspring or a mother's love for her child. Technically he has improved upon "The Man Who Stood Still" in a small degree but in choice of Theme he has made a lucky strike. This same Theme made "The Music Master" such a powerful drawing card, even though in technique it was little better than "Mother."

But the novice may inquire: "What's the good of technique if we can make a hit without it." It does seem true that if the public will stand for this crudeness of construction that we might let it go at that but let us take a glance at conditions. Here are nearly a hundred theatres in New York all clamoring for plays. Good Plays are not available. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that there is not a new Play in New York that comes within a stone's throw of the GOOD standard. And by this standard we mean the average set by the hundreds of Plays of all times that go down to enduring success.

The underlying principles of good Play construction do not change and whether it is Sophocles, Scribe, Shakespeare or Walter the same laws hold good. Only customs change. If any of these authors transgress these principles, the law still remains, but in the measure of their best results we see the operation of eternal dramatic principle. It is by this omnipresent standard, then, that we judge the Plays of aspirants. Nearly every dramatist on Broadway this morning, is an aspirant and not a matured fact. The day will soon come when this overflow of theatres will seek its own level, then look out for the standard of good Plays. Even at this dawn of a new season Plays are going down on all sides and a few managers prefer to keep their theatres dark rather than risk the stuff that is available.

The central idea in "Mother" is that parent's sacrifice of home, fortune and the birthright of her younger children to make good the forgery and mis-appropriation of a worthless son. It does not concern an older sister's self denial in sacrificing her lover to the younger girl, nor the younger sister's broken heart at the reverse in these said love affairs. It does not concern the younger brother's escapade with the forsaken sister of the worthless wife of the forger. It does not concern the mother's love affair with the family attorney. Yet all these divergent sub-themes are mortgaged on to the Plot proper until it becomes the chief problem of the Play to untangle this web of conflicting ideas that we may follow the valid thread of the central idea. For, stripped of these unnecessary and irrelevant adjuncts the principal theme would be a powerful drama

in keeping with the Play standard of all ages. Any competent dramatist could take this Theme and Plot and build a good Play out of it. The germ is there but the bacteria will not allow it a legitimate and steady growth.

Now how may an author remedy such defects of Art? He must avail the positive qualities of playwriting explored by the pioneers of his craft! Each of them added some new light on the subject and the past decade has seen more progress than any century preceding. There is little chance for the most enterprising aspirant to catch up with the procession without some competent instruction. For the standard will be advanced more rapidly in the next ten years than in all the centuries back of it. Drama is coming into its own! The best minds of the country are turning their attention to its study and the science of the Art is gradually being formulated. No Play will be built by technic any more than speech will be made by the science of grammar but to omit this sum of universal knowledge in either instance breeds despair! Moral: study every available work on dramaturgy and observe particularly the operation of the rigid principles of playwriting in good and bad plays!

T H E C O U N T R Y B O Y.

An Excellent Theme Miscarried.

There is no better example extant today of the Play "that might have been" than Edgar Selwyn's latest attempt. With apparently no conviction that a good play must be built by structural Scenes but with the idea that any little stunt that brings a laugh or a tear is valid, he has thrown together a medley of mill ends that is remarkable more for its irrelevant episodes than for its Unity of purpose.

Of these various stunts the best, perhaps, is a boarding house Scene in the second act. The callous existence of the prisoner of a city hash shop is cleverly depicted. But unfortunately the Scene itself does not contribute to Plot and cannot, therefore, be reckoned an integral part of his Play. It would make a neat little vaudeville skit and its severance from the main structure would not injure the interpretation of either Play or sketch.

Like many other commercial writers who have been carried away by the sudden success of "Seven Days" Mr. Selwyn has listened to the laughs of this record breaker and worked in the traditional "comic relief" despite the fact that his Play is of the pathetic variety. Nothing can be more irrational than this notion that a good Play is a "blending of laughter and tears." This catch phrase is the cry of the compromise author and is thoroughly riddled by the success of such plays as "Madam X.," "Paid in Full" and "The Lily." Barely a smile creeps

into the lines of any of these Plays and yet managers and agents alike cling to the theory that is in no wise manifest in the very Plays they have produced successfully. It is safe to say that if an untried author took a masterpiece to any of the managers of these three successes he would be advised to etch in a little "comic relief." Hark to these theoretic conventions and you will write the same sort of stuff that is closing the theatres in New York this season. Let Theme govern the nature of your Play and all things being equal you will command both sympathy and interest of your audience. Truth and not tradition is the ruling power! A giggling auditor is no certain sign of a satisfied patron against the competition of a Play built upon Theme.

But apart from such gross disunity "The Country Boy" lacks one fundamental essential: CLARITY! In the first half of Act I there is no defined purpose. The author wanders aimlessly about the stage in the very thin disguise of characters unknown to the audience attempting to TELL you what his Play is going to be about instead of starting the Act with the actual representation of something doing. Hogs, chickens and automobile vicissitudes all ring in a "comic relief" before any background is made to require it. Of course the audience titter for they come to the theatre to submit themselves to the playwright's illusion and with the customary appetite for entertainment they seize these symptoms of a dawning Plot thinking it the promise of a play.

The Play proper does not attempt to start until these introductory efforts of the author are over. When we see the "country boy" and his sweetheart quarrelling over her criticism of his idle shiftlessness we begin to see what the Play will be about WITHOUT BEING TOLD BY THE AUTHOR. This is what we mean by the ACTUAL REPRESENTATION. It is essentially NOT TALK! The characters speak from compulsion generated by the complication in which they have been placed. The author's only mission is to PLACE them and then see to it that truth and a fair deal characterize their attitudes. The curtain would do well to rise here eliminating all the spurious effort to foretell what we now SEE represented. It tells itself!

This first sign of drama gives us reason to expect a Play concerning the character building of a worthless youth similar to that excellent idea contained in "The Fortune Hunter." No doubt Mr. Selwyn received his impetus to write a regeneration drama from the pronounced success of that simple sermon comedy. But the artifice of theatredom betrayed him!

The "Country Boy" goes to the city to do big things and make a name for himself. He falls desperately in love with a simpering chorus girl just to please the author for we are not

convinced that the boy even though he comes from the country is such an aimless dupe. We are carried through further purposeless Scenes with the boy's sweetheart introduced, without rhyme or reason, and the lad's abject poverty until we arrive at the funniest situation in the entire Play! The despondent youth is rejected by the fickle footlight beauty whereupon he endeavors to disconnect himself from this wicked world by closer association with the gas fixture. Here indeed is the satire of the "comic relief" convention brought about by the companion superstition that theatrical effect is the thing to be achieved at the expense of reason, truth and common sense. But again the law of horse sense asserts itself for the audience engage in a universal titter. Theme has been outraged and they laugh at the author and not with him.

Well, the boy is interrupted in his free lunch of asphyxiating fluid by a fellow boarder who divines his purpose and in a rather commendable Scene diverts the youngster by a truly dramatic means. Intimation of the fact that his companion is about to commit a similar deed rouses remonstrance in the boy's soul and this is the occasion of his reform. He is going back to the little country town to make a name for himself there! We thrill with approbation at this resolution. But alas! Our hopes are shattered! At the very moment when our young hero has a chance to stand for what is good, he falls. At the request of his sweetheart her father's iniquity is winked at and the boy who was about to become something compromises with his own lofty ideals to save the father-in-law's reputation. It is in this respect that we contend an excellent Theme has miscarried.

B O B B Y B U R N I T .

Early Promise of Craftsmanship Not Kept.

When is a Dramatist not a dramatist? When he fails to dramatize! This is the case with Winchell Smith in his late effort at making a Play out of another man's novel. He has not transformed fiction into drama. The Play begins with Talk and Ends with Talk. The characters do not speak because they are factors in a Dramatic Problem compelled to do so by the ever advancing Plot but merely to voice the author's effort to tell the novel narrative in dialog form.

"Bobby Burnit" is far inferior to Mr. Smith's two season success "The Fortune Hunter" and does not fulfill the promise made in the technic of that Play. The author has many years of hard study before him if we are to judge by this miserable makeshift of dramatization. There was truth and verity in the earlier product while in this nothing but the crudest farce abides. The author has caught the fetch-a-laugh

fever which is now rampant in New York City where horse sense is substituted by horse play and legitimate drama is turned into vaudeville absurdities.

Is it any wonder that this wild-goose chase for nonsense leads an author astray? Mr. Smith begins with a Plot about one thing and winds up with another. A department store, a gas plant and then a newspaper. "Bobby" dabbles in all of these and with magic capacity defeats his enemies who were pioneers at the game. And how does he defeat them? What is the trump card? He secures a majority of stock in a corporation by forcing a man who thinks he has killed a comrade to sign a transfer in order to purchase silence. This is the crowning climax of the Play and the gentle auditor is asked to believe that a man thus tricked out of his collateral would make no effort to regain same and that "Bobby" is a smart hero for perpetrating so commendable a sham.

Other little incongruities like a department store proprietor appointing a girl for the trustee of his son we can overlook, even though the author does insist upon concealing her identity all during the time she should be trusteeing the will. This young lady is required to fall into the arms of "Bobby" at just the right time so we will stand for her. Such absurdities sink into insignificance compared with the naked gaps of structure!

But there is one consolation. Each such failure of this artificial type of play is one more victory for Dramatic Art! Each such negative demonstration makes a possible convert to the positive Science of play construction. Apprentices will learn that the realm of Drama is governed BY LAW and that this Law plays no favorites! The only Dramatists who have made enduring success are those who have conformed to Dramatic LAW. Empiricists may cry down this theory only to be finally hit by the operation of the thing they revile—LAW!

T H E C O M M U T E R S . Forbes Takes a Step Backwards.

It is always interesting to watch the after product of a man who has made good in his first Play. James Forbes hit the mark in "The Chorus Lady" and came preciously near a repetition of this achievement in "The Traveling Salesman" at least, he made one good character in the "Salesman" himself. This inspired the confidence of managers and he was sought as a maker of sure plays, a circumstance calculated to test the true worth of a Dramatist. Possibly no Playwright is reliable until he has reached this state where ready money awaits his effort. If he can look the anticipated currency square in the face and still cling to the definition of Drama while he draws the money, he has indeed passed the acid test. This feat Mr. Forbes has not performed.

The only dramatic quality in the latest output is its name: "The Commuters." The Play has a valuable title which the Plot fails to live up to. If we were to take Mr. Forbes' measure from this specimen we would be compelled to think he had everything to learn but the trick of fetching laughs. For he certainly does make fun even at the expense of the ancient annals of this emotion. He makes laughing a contagion of a rather unhealthful sort for he propagates this response by the most artificial performers exaggerating and distorting every atom of mirth to the highest pitch of affectation. At times this patent laugh provoking process sinks to the level of the hypnotic hysterics handed out by the average vaudeville hot-air artist. There is nothing real in the representation. Every chuckle is a cheap theoretic hold-up.

Mr. Forbes' two other Plays had Plots. This one is devoid of either Plot or story. Such an accident might happen with a Dramatist if he were carried away by the strength of one or more vital characters, but this is surely not the case in "The Commuters." None of the characters come within arm's length of "The Chorus Lady" or the "Salesman." In fact the delusion that snared the author is difficult to discern. There is a similarity to "What Happened to Jones" in Mr. Forbes' first act, in the commuting husband who brings home a drunken companion of the night before. But "The Commuter" lacks that splendid CAUSE that holds "What Happened to Jones" together. In the latter piece Jones, the gambler, lands in the Professor's house because they were chased there by the police who raided a prize fight. In "The Commuters" the man of the house himself was so eternally sozzled that the gambler goes to bed and the husband does not learn that "Sammy" is in the house until the next morning. Even then the event is so miserably handled that all of the drama that could be made of it is LOST for want of giving the audience this information from the opening of the play. We do not learn of the fact until the very last minute of the first Act. If this unusual lodger had been utilized as a cause for the "commuter's" extended delay in making ready for his early morning train there would have been suspense of a certain degree all through the Act. As it is, the thing is a hold-up, a laugh compelling device. We laugh because some actor on the stage spreads the infection of hilarious guffawing.

In Act II little or nothing is made of "Sammy's" presence in the house save an interruption of a suffrage party. The suffragette idea is timely and would make a good vaudeville sketch. It does not particularly belong in this Play. But anything belongs here according to the usage of the author. Again he goes to "What Happened to Jones" for the interruption of a policeman. The stunt in no way advances any Plot but is

rung in to stir up another laugh. In the "Jones" Play the policeman performed a service in the Plot. In this Play it is merely horse-play. At the end of Act II the story has lost its head completely and all through III the thing drifts hopelessly into an entirely new absurdity to the effect that the wife pretends to have been out joy riding with a physician (Whom we have never seen) just to get even with the husband who really has indulged in a similar lark. This is a beautiful ideal of Commuting life to present to the Play going public! The suburbanites must be flattered at the high standard of humanity thus portrayed of them!

But it is not our intention to dwell on the ethics of the Play. To turn this criticism to account we must show the student just where Mr. Forbes lost his way and how in his compromise with small flaws he became oblivious to the very definition of Drama. This demonstration takes us into the principle of Logic as applied to the art of Play construction. Nothing should be resorted to in a Play just because the author needs the item. Everything is founded upon CAUSE. Some shiftless writers cling to the belief that this rigid law of Logic is waived in Farcical comedy. To the real Dramatist the very opposite holds good. Incidents of real mirth are founded upon the most immutable Cause for it is the very inevitableness that makes them funny. Take away the quarantine Cause in "Seven Days" and see how flat everything falls. In "The Commuters" there is no such cohesive Cause. In a very simple instance from this farce we will illustrate how an author may lose his grip on this Law of Drama and demoralize his entire product as a result.

At the end of Act II the wife needs a market basket in which to gather provisions from the neighbors for a hurried meal. She puts on her hat to start this foraging expedition and lo and behold! The basket is waiting for her at the very door! But this seems a frivolous illustration? Ah! Dear student! It is the atom that makes the mountain. No real Dramatist can afford to slight the meagrest thing in his property list. Where did this basket come from? Why was it there at the door? Account for it before you make use of it or you are simply inviting disaster in some mightier event by a like absence of Cause. Suppose the servant girl had been ordered to bring a basket. She would obey the command and appear with basket in hand. The wife would ask her to go to the neighbors to procure these edibles and she resigns on the spot. This is the order of events in the farce except that the basket is not ordered brought by the servant. The basket simply happens to be there and this is the rule throughout the entire piece.

Everything "Happens to be there." Nothing belongs for all is haphazard Disunity.

Observe exacting Causes!

T H E S P E N D T H R I F T .

Another Evidence of the Paucity of Plays.

What better proof of the paucity of Good Plays can be had than the fact that a drama with two good Acts and two miserably poor Acts is held over from last season in the desperate hope that the public will stand for it. A few days' trial, however, tested the discernment of the public and the theatre was left dark rather than force the issue. Mr. Porter Emerson Browne evidently does not know that a Play is a logical entity but believes that Drama is a convenient exponent of the author's frivolous caprice. In other words he ventures to place before his audience two Acts of a Play showing the utter abandon of a female spendthrift and in a third Act TELLS us (For we do not SEE it) that this spineless creature withstood the overtures of a libertine who paid her \$20,000 cash! Out of mere caprice the author disarms this voluptuary in order that his shallow heroine may contradict the entire premises of his Play and exert some show of resistance.

In the same act where this gross breach of Logic occurs we note other startling transgressions of dramatic Principle—Sequence—Theme. By Sequence we mean the order in which the evidence reaches the audience. To be of service in the interpretation of his Play Mr. Browne should have shown us the real means by which the wife will acquire this \$20,000 before introducing the fact that she has obtained the money. Instead it is all mystery. The yarn that she borrowed it from Aunt Gretchen is preposterous for we know this aunt. She lays the fat sum upon the table and the audience is allowed to guess at the hidden enigma. But this is not the worst of it. The Theme of the Play is well established by this time and this Theme implies nothing of an adulterous nature. To branch off from the true Theme of "The Spendthrift" to a secondary Theme of Chastity is the height of Disunity. For Theme is the largest subject circumference in a Play and its disruption, therefore, the gravest violation possible.

It is very easy to see how such blunders creep into a manuscript. An author is at work on a Play concerning a spendthrift woman. He arrives at that auspicious moment in the Play known as the climax. His inspiration languishes and he looks about for the muse instead of striving further to execute the necessary situation out of his own material. Along come several successful Plays: "The Thief," "Israel" and "The Lily." The author looks up from his own half made Plot and

takes the tip from these three successful pieces weaving into his "Spendthrift" pattern the stray design of a woman's downfall. But to be different from the rest the woman is illogically rescued from the certain doom that awaits such mental profi-gacy. For surely the creature who sells her body and does not deliver it after the money is paid is no better than the harlot who completes the transaction.

The Fourth Act of "The Spendthrift" like dozens of other recent Plays is an amendment to the original structure and in no sense a legitimate feature of it. A distended effort to separate principals further for the obvious purpose of an insipid reconciliation is all that can be said of this Act by the most charitable. The double-themed deformity ended with III. If any reconciliation is rational between this man and this woman it should happen here. Such a measure, however, would tend to again alter the Theme proper, for any man who could bear up under the shower of impositions perpetrated by this bloodless wife would be abnormally condolent. The Theme and title of such a play would better be "The Propitiator" than "The Spendthrift."

C A M E O K I R B Y .

A Miserable Botch Technically.

It is difficult to conceive how two mature men with ample opportunity for observing modern specimens of the Dramaturgic Art can concoct a thing like "Cameo Kirby" under the manifest impression that it is a Play. It is true the first Act starts off like Drama. The Conditions of a Plot are plainly set forth: the son of a deceased planter will kill a gambler who ruined his father. But these Conditions are relinquished very suddenly and Acts II and III take up other Conditions dealing with the masquerading gambler's love for the planter's daughter. The Problem in the first instance was: "Will the son kill the gambler." The Problem in the second instance is: "Will the girl find out that her lover is "Cameo Kirby." The son, who should be the opposing factor in the first Play disappears from off the earth till Act IV where the authors attempt to resume Conditions #1 and ring down on a happen-ever-after.

Here we have an excellent example of the school boy's notion of Technic. The outraged son who was going to kill the gambler is now reconciled at the latter's unsupported declaration that he ruined their father to prevent another scoundrel from so doing, and the proverbial "deed to the plantation" comes to the rescue showing that our hero-gamester had long since reconveyed the father's property back to him, "his heirs and assigns."

Now such a conclusion might be made feasible with a slight admixture of Plot ingredients, but to splice on a denouement so utterly irrelevant and remote from anything that has been brewing in the preceding Acts of the Play is the crudest of empiricism.

The entire structure of this piece is founded upon a double-barrelled code of perverted honor: the supposition that it is a son's duty to kill the man who gambled his drunken father out of house and home; and that the cultured family of the deceased and ruined father is obligated to approve this illegitimate transfer of plantation, slaves, etc., without so much as a protest; all out of morbid duty to the deceased parent. These moral laws are of the Stage Stagy!

A well built Play is founded upon certain BELIEFS of the auditors, which beliefs are so manipulated that they bring up to new and plausible conclusions. These conclusions constitute the author's philosophy. Imagine the futility of attempting this feat with ideas that are not popular beliefs with the audience and you have a fair estimate of the impossible thing undertaken in "Cameo Kirby." It is preposterous to expect a Play out of such irrelevant premises.

The credulity of the crowd is far greater than the credulity of the individual but their skepticism can easily be provoked if this credulousness is fostered at the expense of structural ideas that are not the common belief of the masses. And where is the practical present day audience who will not smile derisively at the notion of relinquishing home and happiness for the mere whim of liquidating a drunken father's gambling debts? Such a premise is surely no Belief of the Auditor. "You'll have to show me!" would be the universal reply. "If your card player's deed is valid let him eject us!" This would be the American's attitude toward such rotten codes of honor and the fact that this deed was executed on board a steamboat in the middle of the Mississippi River would not tend to allay all possibilities of litigation before final surrender.

The authors dispense with all rational thought for us by setting this Plot conveniently in the past. But the Play is written for the present! Here's the difficulty. Any Drama done for contemporary audiences that tends to shut out the reasoning faculty either of the characters or the auditors is doomed to failure and oblivion. We need only refer to the Plays of a decade back to see that this style of Play was accepted. But a new day is dawning! The author deals with a far different auditor! "The world do move!"

“World” Prize Play.

It may be of interest to many of our subscribers who tried for the New York “World” prize to know that Mrs. Bellinger has completed the manuscript and handed it over to Mr. Harris for production as soon as same can be arranged. We all congratulate the winning author. She has been a close student of play construction for many years. An analysis of her play will appear in THE DRAMATIST soon after its appearance on the stage.

T H E D E S E R T E R S .

Bowery Melodrama on Broadway.

Mr. Henry B. Harris did not profit by the failure of “The Commanding Officer” last season. Military melodrama replete with preposterous impossibilities is a thing of the past! “The Deserters” has all of the absurdities of “The Commanding Officer” and still some. Strange to say the most artificial role is allotted Miss Helen Ware, the star, who is asked to make real the part of a female detective with a convenient philosophy, all her own, to the effect that only criminals below the distinction of murderers deserve punishment. Sure death awaits the public performance of any drama founded on a sophistry. For Plays must be built of accepted beliefs or desires possessed by a majority of the Playgoing public! It is to be hoped “The Deserters” will be the last experiment along this preposterous line, for the financial loss to the management is terrific.

A SPECIMEN CRITICISM OF AN AMATEUR PLAY BY THE EDITOR.

Yours of the 22nd, and the play, both arrived safely. I note what you say about managers not rendering you a criticism. This is beyond their province. A true criticism might offend and as only one Play in a thousand shows any real hope, you can imagine the host of enemies a manager would create in a lifetime if he told the truth! But criticism IS our province and making enemies part of the work, if we are to subjugate those 999 mortals who presume to write Plays without the slightest regard for the Science of the Art.

“The Reformers.”

In the science of Logic any argument to be sound must stand the test of syllogistic analysis. It must be susceptible of reduction to three primal terms the first two of which logically lead to the third which is the conclusion. For instance, we

reach the conclusion that Socrates is mortal in the following manner:

All men are mortal.

Socrates is a man.

Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

For centuries this form of reasoning has been the basis of logic. It is only of late years that a similar syllogism has been found to hold good in drama. We call this dramatic syllogism the Problem. The three terms are: Conditions, Cause and Conclusion. I shall attempt to reduce your manuscript to Problem and then after showing you the impossibility of such an operation construct a Problem setting forth the Play you evidently intended to build.

Problem No. 1.

The Play You Have Attempted.

Conditions.

A hypocritical parson renounces his son for choosing a stage career.

Cause.

A stranger finds the boy's mother is a shameless flirt.

Conclusion.

Therefore (?) the father is reconciled to his son's profession?

Problem No. 2.

The Play You Intended to Build.

Conditions.

A hypocritical parson renounces his son for choosing a stage career.

Cause.

The son detects a swindle in the father's ecclesiastical methods.

Conclusion.

Therefore, the father is reconciled to his son's profession.

In the second Problem you will notice that the third clause or Conclusion follows, as a logical reasoning of the other two. In the first Problem, which is the one you employ, there is absolutely no relation between the first and second clauses nor between the second and third. There can be no logical outgrowth of a Conclusion from such disconnected premises.

You might urge that I have not chosen for the second clause of your Problem the CAUSE that you intended. It is true you bring in an uncle, an utter stranger to the Plot, and at the last minute of the Play attempt to fabricate a Conclusion by having this old gentleman announce that he had heard of the father's hypocrisy in the West. This is too remote. The father's hypocrisy must be SEEN in his own conduct and not TALKED about. You show this hypocrisy in a scene between the father and his partner in crime but you do not let the right character see it. You merely show it to the audience! The son is the logical agent of the old man's undoing and you must bring him in upon this scene of degradation if you wish to preserve the very essence of Play which is a conflict between human wills. If the son is not in this scene he is not in the Conflict. As you have it, the mother intercepts their debauch but she is not made fully aware of their depravity and she could do nothing with this evidence if she were. The valid conflict is between the father and son. Hold it there.

What You Intended.

You evidently started out with the intention of having the son discover the hypocrisy of the father and use this evidence in such a way as to make the parent a ready party not only to the son's career but to his marriage with an actress. You strayed from this path because you had no structural plan securely outlined in your own mind. Your Play was not BUILT, it was WRITTEN! Instead of devising in advance the means by which you would bring this fraud of a father to justice you allowed your pen to follow inclination and the chance of catching the mother in a compromising situation betrayed you. Your fancy seized a tempting opportunity and you jotted down the scene not realizing that the mother was no party to the Conflict. Her disgrace would in no way advance your Plot. It is the father you must bring to terms. The young man you employed to expose the mother was foreign to the Plot and to the cast of characters already introduced. He had no place in the Play.

There are hundreds of minor errors, like the introduction of Phoebe and her painful death, which do not serve to promote Plot and therefore become features of disunity. But why dwell on them when a correct structure of the bolder framework will

eliminate the need of all? You attempted to sound a note for your Theme when you made this poor wretch denounce the clergy on her deathbed—but nothing counts in a play that is recited apart from the performance of the Plot itself. Whatever attack you wish to make upon a condition in society must be done in the regular development of your Play and with the legitimate characters of the Conflict. All side remarks are wasted and more, they halt the direct progress of the main Action.

How Will You Remedy All This?

I would advise you to take Proposition No. 2 and devise a Plot to execute such a play. You have an abundance of material for BUILDING a very good Play. You also have the creative faculty. You have merely gone wrong in the fundamental framework. Lay out your plans and specifications before you touch a word of the dialog. I have shown you how to handle the true CAUSE given in the second Problem; Viz.: "The son detects a swindle in his father's ecclesiastical methods." You must contrive to have him intercept the father in his debauch. You may reply that you see no way to accomplish this. My dear fellow: this is the delight of the true Dramatist! This battle with obstacles is the very essence of Play construction! Prescribe a problem for yourself and then solve it! If you balk in this initial step you might as well abandon the craft, for it is a veritable maze of just such puzzling problems. Some such conundrum is eternally challenging you.

Reconstruct by merely outlining the essentials of Plot and I will give you further help toward perfecting your Play. It should not require more than a page to state fundamental elements constituting your drama. Observe that the second clause of Proposition (We call it CAUSE) is the main-spring of the entire works. Every other chief factor in Plot takes genesis from this one Parent CAUSE and your Play becomes a network interdependent Causes firmly tied and strung around it.

Yours very truly,

THE DRAMATIST,
Easton, Pa.

This is a specimen analysis of an amateur Play. Yours might be widely different in offence, but unless you are that one in the thousand your Play will contain similar violations of technic.

VARIOUS managers are continually requesting that we forward any plays that we deem suited to their needs. Of course we cannot volunteer to read every play that our subscribers send in, but if a brief synopsis of the play idea is submitted, the editor will offer his opinions as to the marketability of the product.

The Dramatist,
Easton, Pa.

The DRAMATIST

LUTHER B. ANTHONY, Editor

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The Province of Analysis

THE AMUSEMENT MARKET WOULD NOT SEEM GLUTTED WITH GOOD PLAYS WHEN WE ARE CONFRONTED WITH THE CONDITION OF ONE MANAGER OFFERING \$5000 FOR A NEW VAUDEVILLE ACT AND ANOTHER OFFERING \$2000 FOR A PLOT. TO BE SURE, THERE IS A SURPLUS OF THE DRAMA IN VOGUE A FEW YEARS BACK BUT THE STANDARD HAS CHANGED.

INCREASED COMPETITION IS THE INDIRECT CAUSE OF THIS CHANGE SINCE IT GIVES SPEED TO THE LAW OF THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST, BUT THE TRUE SOURCE OF THE INNOVATION IS THE INTELLIGENCE OF THE PLAYGOING PUBLIC. PEOPLE ARE NOT SO CREDULOUS AS FORMERLY. THEY STAND FOR LESS SOPHISTRY AND MOONSHINE. THE SUREST INDICATION OF THIS FACT IS THE RESPECT PAID BY COMMERCIALISM TO OUR COMMON SENSE IN ADVERTISING SCIENCE.

ADVERTISING SCIENCE? IS THIS A SLIP OF THE EDITOR'S PEN? NO! WE ARE REDUCING EVERYTHING TO SCIENCE NOWADAYS AND THE FELLOW WHO USED TO DO THINGS IN A HAPHAZARD FASHION NOW FOLLOWS FORMULATED CODE.

THIS ANSWERS A VERY GRAVE CHARGE BROUGHT AGAINST THE CRITICISMS IN THE DRAMATIST. "YOU KNOCK EVERY PLAY THAT'S PRODUCED!" ONE MAN WRITES. WELL, PERHAPS WE DO. BUT HOW MANY AUTHORS HAVE GIVEN AS

MUCH SCIENTIFIC THOUGHT TO THE PREPARATION FOR THEIR ART AS THE EXPERT ADVERTISING EDITOR? HOW MANY HAVE GIVEN AS MUCH TIME TO THE PREPARATION FOR DRAMATIC AUTHORSHIP AS THE ARCHITECT, SURGEON, AND LAWYER GIVE? AS DAVID BELASCO SAYS, 95% OF THEM LAUGH AT THE NEED FOR STUDY.

IS IT ANY MARVEL, THEN, THAT THE SUDDEN BIRTH OF A NEW SCIENCE, THE SCIENCE OF PLAY CONSTRUCTION, FINDS INFINITE FLAWS IN THE PRODUCTS OF THOSE WHO HAVE PRACTICED THE ART WITH NO THOUGHT TO SCIENTIFIC TRAINING?

ACRID CRITICISM, BASED UPON RIGID ANALYSIS, NEED NOT CONDEMN A PLAY FOR PRESENT PRODUCTION PURPOSES. THE COMPETITION OF EXCELLENT PLAYS IS NOT SO PLENTIFUL. IT IS FOR THE TRUTH OF PRINCIPLE WE ARE CONTENDING AND NOT FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF EVERY PLAY THAT HAPPENS TO VIOLATE LAW!

THE PREDICTION WE MAKE IS FOR THE FUTURE. A NEW GENERATION OF PLAYWRIGHTS, SCHOOLED, IN THE PRINCIPLES OF THEIR CRAFT, WILL PUT PRESENT PRACTITIONERS TO FLIGHT AS DID THE DOCTORS THE QUACKS IN THE MEDICINE OF OLD. MANAGERS WILL SELECT THEIR SPECULATIONS WITH THE AID OF A POSITIVE SCIENCE AND CRITICS WILL BASE THEIR OPINIONS ON ROCK BOTTOM FACTS. FOR UNIVERSITIES WILL EMBRACE THIS BRANCH AND DRAMA, THE GREATEST OF ARTS WILL TAKE ITS JUST RANK AT THE HEAD OF THE COLLEGE CURRICULUM!

GET IN ON THE GROUND FLOOR! READ THE DRAMATIST!

Plays of the Season

THE THUNDERBOLT.*

The Best Play of the New Century.

Since our journal began, no Dramatist has so successfully shut the gate of criticism against us as Arthur Wing Pinero in his delightful though sordid comedy "The Thunderbolt." This Play produced at the New Theatre easily ranks Sir Arthur the Arch Dramatist of the New Century. For besides being a technical gem it lacks that intellectual arrogance which immediately disqualifies many English Dramas.

The Poet or Novelist may ascend to lofty altitudes forsaking us poor sinners but such a seclusion is impossible to the Dramatist. His field is right down here among the common everyday herd of mortals. His intellect must not surpass the intellect of the throng only as he interprets mighty thoughts thru the A-B-C emotions of his audience. But this is digression.

It is exceedingly fortunate for our readers that such a modern play is in print so that the high standards advocated by The DRAMATIST may not remain mere castles in the air. Procure this Play and see the Principles APPLIED. In treating of it we will refer to the page number for illustrations and to substantiate our claim that "The Thunderbolt" is the greatest Play extant we will proceed to dissect it on our usual method of first reducing the entire structure to a three clause Problem.

Problem.

Conditions: A man bequeaths his entire estate to a natural daughter.

Cause: A legal relative destroys the will in order to disinherit her.

Conclusion: The bequest does not miscarry.

This is a pretty brief condensation but it covers the boldest outlines of Plot. One of the most difficult problems on earth for the amateur is to SEE his Play in the nucleus. A detail here and a detail there so clutters his attempt to state Plot compactly that the skeleton becomes a well covered animal too hidden in flesh and fibre to allow anatomical study. This state of premature development is fatal to fundamental construction and the above Problem is amply elaborate for first soundings.

*Walter H. Baker & Co., Boston. Price 50c.

Problem being sound we must now proceed to Conflict. Is there a conflict to supply the psychological element of FIGHT which is the real essence of Drama save that we supplement the animal instinct for battle with the more modern weapons of human wills. The human Conflict is well provided for in "The Thunderbolt." The struggle is thirteen to one. That is, out of the nineteen characters employed, fourteen are actually in the battle and nearly thirteen of these are pitted against the one—the natural daughter of the deceased. It is a sordid study of the selfish phase of society affording the sprightliest humor in its contemplation upon the stage.. The author's analysis of character is so intricate that his unfolding of so gloomy a theme at times becomes positively ludicrous. His entire handling of the Conflict is new and unique for the heroine is made to appear to take no part in it. The thirteen other combatants are finally hit by the boomerang of their incessant acts of selfishness.

And out of this grim, miserable story, what is the lesson taught by the humor of irony? There are many of them. No spectator can leave the theatre without the subconscious suggestion for nobler, loftier living. What the Third Floor Back endeavors to do with goody-goody Talk, Pinero has accomplished by legitimate means of Drama. The behavior of this illicit daughter of the deceased beer merchant is the most pungent sermon on the true brotherhood of man we have ever imbibed—for we do not LISTEN to it—we drink it in through the emotions. It gives a bigger heart, a purer soul! And if we were inclined to believe the current German theory that Christ was the natural son of a Roman soldier, this character of "Helen" would go a long way toward conviction. The sordid background is an invaluable contrast. The little grains of good sparkle all the brighter in the sands of selfishness.

But it would be a technological crime to pass by the negative elements of Play construction contained in this great Play. Not that they are crimes of enormity but that we must ever look to the purity of Theme else we forget the use of the Dramatic microscope.

First we will examine into the division of Acts, which seems to be a popular subject in this issue of The DRAMATIST. How does our 3-act theory apply to "The Thunderbolt?" Act I ends on page 64 according to the text. Is this a proper ending? It would be save for one greater defect—the audience is not put in possession of the Plot secret—that Phyllis has destroyed the will. Here is the one and only place for this inside information to "come across" if the full force of interest is to be availed. To suppress it may stimulate considerable Suspense—but a suspense of the undramatic sort. To let Phyllis expose her secret here would not in any way spoil the later

scene where she bares her tortured heart to her husband—it would enhance that scene at least fifty percent!

We have commended this trait from a positive standpoint in our article on "Nobody's Widow," this number, and the more you think of it the firmer must be your conviction that Suspense depends upon the superior knowledge of the audience against the ignorance of one of the characters on the stage. That one is "Thaddeus," her husband, in this instance. If the Dramatist had cleverly conveyed this criminal knowledge to the audience, or better still—LET US SEE—her steal the will; the Suspense of the piece would be many times multiplied and technic thereby improved. Read pages 114 to 125 with the supposition that you had this advance knowledge of Phyllis' destruction of the will but that Thaddeus did not possess same and see if there is any diminution in the effect of this excellent scene upon him. Of course you must prevent READING the scene as one reads a story, you must adopt the Play-reader's attitude of SEEING the Play!

The second Act is the logical climax of the Play and without doubt is the only other legitimate division of Plot for certain purposes. The division between III and IV is false and superfluous simply because the author has temporarily run away with a tempting scene somewhat disjoined from his own Play. There is Drama in the accumulated selfishness that permits these narrow mortals to accuse "Helen" of collusion in defrauding them out of their portion, but it smacks of material for an entirely different Play, as does the long cross examination of "Thaddeus" which could be infinitely closer to Plot were his wife present to reflect the purpose of prodding him with these incriminating questions.

Read pages 151 to 192. Can you see where Pinero goes off on a tangent? Conduct this cross examination in the presence of "Phyllis"—let the audience SEE her cave in at the awful onslaught directed at her husband and her behavior gives the snap away! There you are! Intensified DRAMA—because VISUAL! Surely the other method is a swamp of waste compared to the keener Dramatic treatment!

Aside from this flaw there is little else of importance. The Play might begin at once by skipping the first four pages and opening with page 5. There is a universal tendency among writers new and old to attempt to INTRODUCE the Play before they PLAY it. You can't do this without lapsing into TALK and you might as well take the hint from the motion picture and let the reel roll! In other words SHOW the thing—don't TELL IT!

One farewell remark about disunity. It is so slight we ought to overlook it but we can't. The love story between "Helen" and a priest has no more connection with this Play

than the rise and fall of the Roman Empire! We look at it as a trembling attempt on the part of the author to reconcile that romantic portion of his audience bent on the happy ending, but even this narcotic failed to do the work in his own land, for we understand the Play was a fizzle in London. Does this mean that America furnishes a more cultivated audience for the best Play on earth? If it does mean this, look out for your tools and technics!

ELECTRICITY AND GET RICH QUICK WALLINGFORD.

Cohan and Gillette Trade Places

One of the startling events of the present season is to see Gillette and Cohan swap positions in the hall of fame. This somersault is due chiefly to the recent change of dramatic pattern demanded by a saner audience in the thing they begin to KNOW as a Play. The Art has crystallized into a Science and the ordinary auditor who used to take his pink medicine from the physician at a gulp now asks the where's and why-fore's—"What effect will this dope have, Doctor?" The hod-carrier now seeks the Cause and Effect of things as did the scholar of old!

Four years ago Gillette was deemed the Dramatist and Cohan a mere parody. Today the tables are turned. Cohan is the Dramatist and Gillette comes so near the parody in his latest venture "Electricity" that there is no fun in it. Cohan has listened to the call of the Crowd while Gillette has catered to the classes. The one appeals to the subconscious, composite soul of his audience—the other to the conscious mentality of the individual. The one BUILDS a Play founded upon the BELIEFS of his auditor — the other WRITES an essay founded upon his individual view of socialism.

Get Rich Quick Wallingford

Without exception George M. Cohan has made more technical progress in the past two years than any author in America. With his handicap of musical comedy standards he had farther to go than the average beginner. The hill has been harder to climb. In the present instance he has taken a book idea, to be sure, but we are not concerned with this fact save that it requires still more genius for the feat. It is harder to transform well written fiction into Drama than to build an entirely new and original Play! And the truly Dramatic Germ in this Plot is the Dramatist's flash of genius, not the novelist's latent work.

And here let us explain this "flash" of the Dramatist. We refer to the chief CAUSE in the Problem, which we understand is entirely the invention of Mr. Cohan:

"The Crooks turn straight BECAUSE of their commercial triumph born of a criminal tendency to exploit little deals!"

We call this the Dramatic Germ because it supplies the fundamental element in this most peculiar regeneration Play. The Dramatist transforms premeditated evil into spontaneous good—and there you are! It is this mysterious uplift element that is pulling continual crowds to the Gaiety Theatre with a certainty that brooks little competition. Other Dramatists are attempting regeneration Plays but most of them lack this vital spark which put "The Fortune Hunter" in the king row—that subtle trick of Providence developing positive qualities out of perverse purpose!

Several spurious biplots mar the construction of this piece and the fourth act is an excrescent growth tacked on to the main Plot after all essence has been squeezed out of the material. It is obviously a temptation on the part of the author to fill the measure to overflowing long after the effervescence of his fun gas has escaped. The three legitimate Acts of the Play round up one of the best examples of American craftsmanship on the stage today. It is staged with the instinct of a Belasco and doubtless this propensity for picturesque scenic effect had led Mr. Cohan into the idle maneuvers of character parade which consume all of Act IV.

Electricity.

Without exception "Electricity" is the least like a Play of anything put on the New York stage for seasons! Mr. Gillette has either a tremendously vague notion of what constitutes Drama or he has lost the train of his intention during the repeated revisions of his piece prior to New York production. Judging from the long procession of clap-trap performances that New York audiences stand for, there is no more tolerant public in the Universe. It is safe to say, however, that every auditor paying his price of admission to this makeshift gave vent to audible protest when the ordeal was over.

It is only as a negative example of construction that the piece holds interest to the student. With a Problem founded on a fallacy, a Plot without a Conflict, a heroine of awful artificiality and a treatment replete with stone walls of disunity, there is not paucity for profitable illustration of what the aspirant should avoid. There is little left to perpetuate the glory of the author of "Clarice" and "Secret Service."

At the opening of the Play we see a father plotting with his son to marry off his daughter whom we are TOLD is an advocate of Socialism and opposed to accumulated resources. Of

course we all know such fathers and believe there are such girls in fairyland, but the Law of Cause and Effect that permeates everything under the sun, as well as drama, demands that we ESTABLISH such characters as a reality before we use them on the stage. It would require considerable treatment to substantiate either of these people, too much perhaps, for any Dramatic value possible in the outcome.

But passing these minor absurdities, could the Play proceed? The suitor for this damsel of deranged whims disguises as a day laboring electrician so that he may appease her antipathy for wealth. The suitor has money to burn. Straightway the Plot changes color and in Act II we find ourselves in an utterly strange environment listening to the wails of somebody's sweetheart whose wedding day is doomed by the non appearance of the groom. Story fashion, the Problem has drifted from one of marrying off the girl, don't you see, to an entirely new Conflict of keeping the electrician drunk whilst the counterfeit workman makes love to Miss Sociology.

Step by step the unconvincing complication rises, each ascent a little more remote from Plot! By the time we reach Act III the plotting father has ceased to know anything about his own Plot—the disposal of his daughter—so that the wrathy parent may make fun with himself swearing at the electric lights now disconnected by the tamperings of the bogus electrician. We have a few more complications concerning the electrician's fiancee whose future spouse is still a victim of inebriety and then after sustained misunderstandings of the most obvious transparency the grand conclusion of the original Problem is achieved instantly! In a fit of mock martyrdom the hero is "going to tell her good bye and go!" Just here the long arm of the Dramatist comes to the rescue. He clears the stage of all other characters and as the two principals pronounce in concert the mysterious term: "Electricity," the curtain descends upon a question mark. Why did he write it? The audience have no source of knowing and judging from the text the author is not certain himself.

T H E T E S T .

By the author of *Mother*

"The Test" clings to no concentrated story and no sooner is one branch of biplot started than another is sprung. The motives of the characters are as artificial as the types themselves. Conditions are as vague as lack of information could well make them and Effects are continually before Cause. We see the author's naked effort, for instance to stir up jealousy before the lovers are even known to the audience so that by the time the curtain descends on Act I the chief occupation of the spectator becomes a guessing at what the author means.

We have said that Effect follows Cause. We can go a step further and say that premises follow Conclusion, or nearly so, in the peculiar fashion with which Mr. Goodman gives us hazy knowledge of the Conditions of the Conflict for the first time at the very climax of his play. Sprinkled all through the Play are chapters of past history that are TOLD instead of being woven into the present pattern as bits of unobtrusive thread.

Now all this may not interest those who cannot see the performance of "The Test" but we try to build the requested criticism so that all readers may profit by the negative instances of play principle. We are fast departing from this class of product and Mr. Goodman himself would not think of putting out such stuff now, although "Mother" smacks of similar disparity of purpose. As Channing Pollock says: "Mother has every bit of the hard luck you expected her to have, and then some. Hers is a three ring circus of a house. She has three sets of children, so to speak, and each set provided its own peculiar brand of trials and tribulations." Mr. Goodman is making rapid strides, but as you see he has not yet advanced to the head of the class where he can build a whole play out of ONE THING. That is the test of the mastercraftsman!

M A R Y M A G D A L E N E.*

Maeterlinck's Off-Stage Drama.

It is with trembling pen we tackle the work of a Poet. For Drama and Poetry are two separate arts. But since Mr. Maeterlinck has descended into the vulgar realm of Drama, bereft of all the glamour of verse, we may take up the probe with more assurance. The present attempt at the English standard of Drama is as bad an output as the average foreigner's change of tongue, but we must judge the piece by what we know as drama and not by that mystic literary measure set by the author in previous work. Technique teaches us not only that Poetry and Drama are two separate Arts but that Dramatic Poetry is still a third—a mongrel Art.

It is our purpose to show that this poetic habit of mind has marred the Dramatic conscience of the author and that it will require almost as much study on his part to master the Principles of play construction as any beginner of like intellect. His literary capacity has taken him into descriptive rather than dramatic dialog and in this particular instance has resulted in an off-stage Play, the Conflict taking place anywhere but before his audience. And this results largely in a Drama of TALK. And in addition to this main flaw there are minor essays of disunity to Theme introduced merely to voice the

*Dodd, Mead & Co., New York. Price \$1.25.

author's philosophy. A strong example of this digression is the grief essay contained on pages 36, 37, 38 and 39. Longinus and his child are plumped into the dialog with all the indifference of an amateur WRITING his first masterpiece.

But beneath all this is a far graver difficulty—the dialog is incoherent! "Why, I understand it, perfectly," you may retort. But Drama must ever be measured by the minds of the multitude. Even your interpretation is often based upon conscious thought and this is a violation of purest Drama. But the poor fellow who has no acquaintance with Metrodorus, Kermachus, Zeno, Hades and Persephone—what of him? Are you in the majority with a theatre audience, or is he. Of course if you contend that this is a Drama for intelligent men, there is no argument. But is there such a thing? Isn't Drama the one Art that is calculated to appeal to every man, woman and child of us in the A B C language of the soul? Are not words mere auxiliaries in this Art put in for the purpose of illuminating WHAT WE SEE?

Hark to the broadside that Appius lets out (Refer to page 28 of the English translation) and let us know if you think this coherent in a Dramatic sense. "Venus has left Cyprus and soars above Jerusalem! Or rather, it is the fair Techmessa, who already brings back the smile to the lips of the son of Telamon! Admire, O Coelius, the magnificent image raised under this portico by Love and Beauty!" Is this calculated to convey a thought to the subconscious mind of the spectator or does it halt the Play? For the average auditor we would say the latter is true. It is the Call of the Poet who cannot lose his tuneful opportunity.

And still deeper lies a sterner deficiency! Let us strip the Problem to its naked truth that we may examine its anatomy.

Problem.

Conditions: An officer seeks a harlot whose spiritual love is awakened by Christ.

Cause: The officer is commissioned to slay Christ.

Conclusion: Will she barter her body for the Lord's life?

This is the gist of "Mary Magdalene" heralded as a Theme of profound reverence in no degree verging on sacrilege! It is the spiritual regeneration of the Magdalene! In spite of the fact that a large fraction of the civilized world look upon Christ as a sacred figure this playwright deems it fit to represent His love as a factor of lascivious traffic. But there, we are posing as moral censors when our horizon does not permit us to see clearly above the mere mechanical. We simply had to say it!

A discussion of structural weakness is more in our line. We have said that the Play contains no Conflict. This is not literally but dramatically true. The spiritual opponent of Verus, the Roman Officer, is not sufficiently dramatized. His only combatant is the off-stage influence of the Lord's reported presence. The story of raising Lazarus from the dead is Told not represented upon the stage. It is not essential that we see him actually exit from the tomb; but his earlier entrance in Act II to replace the vapid twaddle of the others (Read Scene II, Act II) would convert dialogued narrative into dramatized speech. The author has refrained from introducing Christ, himself, and the restraint is a wise one. But some such reality as Lazarus must actively take His place if the story is to consummate actual Dramatic Conflict. Instead of thus visualizing the Spiritual element, the Play stumbles about the Plot vainly attempting to sustain this factor by idle chatter of the Lazarus incident and the miraculous cure of Lepers, cripples, etc.

As for the public approval of the piece, it should certainly take, with its double appeal to sacrilege and spirituality! The entire product is sufficiently obscure to be conveniently interpreted any old way and the religious enthusiast will doubtless make his own version of it. For like a sermon it leaves room for the auditor's particular slant, whereas the real drama molds conviction with immutable fixity.

This is essentially true of a well built Play for the reason that we SEE the Problem unfold before us and believe in it, provided the author's illusion is Logical. If we accept his premises we must concur in his Conclusion, not with respect to all things but the ONE specific syllogism set up for solution. Logical solution is impossible in the case discussed: "That Mary will NOT barter her body for the Lord's life," for we have not seen her character pass through the flames of transfiguration necessary to such high moral force. If we rely upon belief in divine impulse for this choice, particularly with theatrical audiences, we are again going beyond the limitation of Law which fundamentally prescribes that we deal with beliefs of the whole public.

"Audiences with the experience of observation or of hearsay, will not accept conduct outside their own knowledge."

David Belasco.

T H E G A M B L E R S

The Authors' Producing Company.

Besides being Charles Klein's greatest achievement structurally, "The Gamblers" is notable as the initial effort of The Author's Producing Company, an institution that promises

much to the American Dramatist, known and unknown. Every move toward closer fidelity to the author's conception as well as the subjugation of the ignorant stagemanager's innovations, is a triumph for technic! Too many Plays of moderate worth are made ridiculous by the mechanical meddling of the hide-bound stage carpenter in his honest effort to excite what he thinks Suspense. May the Authors' Producing Company prosper and bring many more masterpieces to market!

At the start let us call attention to Mr. Klein's greatest technical accomplishment. He has put his new Play in THREE Acts! We are not vain enough to think that this is solely the result of the doctrine handed down by *The DRAMATIST*. Far from it. This improved method of dividing the Conflict into three epochs of exposition is in keeping with the advance this author is making all along the line. There is more Unity in this Play, more Sequence, More Logic and a higher value of Scene Construction in every sense. Three Acts, therefore, are the natural result of higher evolution. A number of new Plays have them! If for no other reason, they are commendable in that they conserve the element of illusion.

It is true that the author has wavered between two distinct plots and that the real story, the love episode, is not as new as the high finance feature of second plot. The two have been ingeniously interwoven but their coexistence in the one Play is detrimental to Unity in its last analysis. We call the love episode the real story for the author chooses to climax his Play with this, and ends with it as well. Either plot would make an excellent Play, we merely prefer the financial fragment for the reason that missuspected marital infidelity is too closely a copy of plays like "The Thief" and "The Spendthrift." Rip that element out of Klein's new Play and you still have a great Problem out of which the same clever craftsman could construct infinitely more dramatic Scenes.

H U S B A N D . *

Noted Critic's Craftsmanship.

The critic is often called more destructive than constructive. This charge is fully substantiated in the constructive effort of John Corbin whose book "Husband" has been recently published. If the identical work could be brought to him for critical inspection he would doubtless render the same verdict we now offer: the writer of this work has the crudest notion of how to go about BUILDING the framework of Drama. He attempts to write a Play without recourse to that Dramatic unit known as a Scene and persists in TALKING the Plot essentials that should HAPPEN before the audience by means of REPRESENTATION on the stage.

*Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston. Price \$1.50.

We do not mean to say that there are no Scenes in "Husband" but we do say that the Play is not built by means of them. For the far greater part is a heterogeneous collection of aimless chatter and drift. It is hardly as bad as "Electricity" by Gillette. But this is faint praise. The Scenes attempted on pages 114 to 124; 185 to 209 &c., have Drama in them and rise above the plane of mere TALK but they fall short of their design for the reason that oceans of gibberish engulf them.

Page 223 shows a soliloquy cleverly avoided and the end of Act II brings an effect in the way of a strong situation which should have been the result of demonstrated CAUSES. The premises have been so fearfully muddled in the undramatic method of introduction that they fail to stand above dozens of other irrelevant thoughts equally emphasized. Whatever Suspense stirs the souls of the audience at this climax, therefore, is as momentary as though it were treated apart from the Play.

From pages 9 to 53 there is at least one new subject TALKED to the page. Page 62 begins a Scene which lapses into reminiscence of little or no Plot value. Things happen on page 88 but lack of preparation leaves the author's hand exposed to public view. And there is little sympathy possible for types of character that do not exist within the mind or imagination of the crowd—the masses.

Act II follows the same rhetorical fashion and even the things Talked about happened off stage. After 22 pages we reach a Scene (115 to 124) but so far as Plot progress is concerned we stand about where we started. Several times there is an allusion to an illegitimate child which misleads the audience into thinking some developments will come of it. But neither mother nor child ever gets across the footlights save as the burden of confused ideas. They are not in the Play no matter what subtle fancies they fired the author's mind with.

Act III the conversational drama continues. The minor characters recapitulate to make sure the audience has an inventory of things transpired. And much has happened between the acts, but this does not concern the spectators for it is the betrothal of people that do not belong in the Plot. They do utter the best lines in the book, however, and we are grateful for that. (Note two speeches top of page 171.) The denouement deserts the original Theme and endeavors to strike a new one. Husband and wife both branch off suddenly on the subject of race suicide. (Pages 214 and 223). And what is the grand total? The husband who may have been the father of the illicit child, for all we know, is reconciled to his queen of a wife, the meantime mistress of a molly-coddle nobleman. The Play is in THREE Acts!

But lest the reader conclude that we cite these flaws merely to vaunt our knowledge of technology, let us draw an immediate moral: Belasco says 95 per cent of every hundred persons who try to write Plays do not even recognize the necessity for study. Here is the exceptional case of a noted critic, Ex-play expert for the New Theatre; and even he has not seen this vital need of mastering the cardinal principles of play construction before attempting to BUILD a Play. Take the lesson home, dear reader! Let it teach you a proper reverence for your Art! If a man of Mr. Corbin's cultivation fails for want of fundamental training, what chance is there for you with like neglect and far less apprehension. You have one consolation in the state of things. Intellectual arrogance is against the author. He must not write above the heads of those who spend but fifty cents to "see the show." Our dramatists have been students, not scholars. They are the men who with the instinct born of brotherly love mix with the multitude and KNOW their souls!

Dramatist Know thy subject!

Dramatist Know mankind!

Dramatist Mix well these two ingredients!

THE FAMILY.

Pleases Boston But Not New York.

We print the following personal letter from the editor to Mr. Davis to demonstrate how a waste of unnecessary dialogue may impair a play for Metropolitan production. Several nights after the receipt of this letter the Play was withdrawn in New York, although it was so good technically it made even managers sniff and blink.

October 10, 1910.

My dear Mr. Davis:

I arrived at one definite conclusion the other night at the trial performance of your new Play. Although this is your first production you have set a higher standard of technique than that of any American author save Eugene Walter. If every play in New York were required to conform to your structural standard, the Gay White Way would be suddenly converted into Cimmerian darkness. Particularly is this true of "The Family" in such principles as THEME, Plot, Unity, and Drama.

Theme is the broadest principle in Drama and the first step toward a restriction of the material to be utilized in a Play. You adhere to Theme with strict fidelity. Theme is implied in the title of your Play. A fuller definition might be "The Family a Unit." There is no single instance of a violation of this Law in your Play.

Your Plot being strung upon this Theme is unique and original. The story hinges upon a new treatment of an old, old idea of the seduced daughter. You employ the family as an organized entity to defend this child against her betrayer and the hollow convention of Society which would turn her out even from her own fireside. And after all this new turn to an old familiar tale is all we need for an original Play. It is in combining the common ideas that we arrive at the uncommon and not in combining uncommon or unfamiliar materials. This is all you will have to do to build another Plot as good as "The Family."

The Unity of your Play surpasses anything we have had in New York for several years—even the Plays of Fitch and Walter. You hammer away at the single-centred conception of Theme and Plot with almost ideal results. I can point to no other specimen that illustrates the application of this Principle more potently. In this particular as well as in many others your work is a splendid model for students of the Drama.

Suspense is the only Law you cheerfully violate. But even in this Principle your work so far surpasses the host of indifferent current Plays that it might seem malicious to point out minor defects if your high standard of craftsmanship did not invite scrutiny. The chief transgression is in Act I, Scene I. You say you employ this first Scene to show precedent Conditions of the family circle. A careful analysis of your Plot will show you that it is not necessary or essential to show them. Here is a synopsis of your Play:

An erring girl feigns marriage to avoid family censure.

Her deception is detected.

Will the family rescue her and share her shame?

You will find nothing in this Scientific Problem that calls for advance details, almost devoid of ordinary interest (save for a pun or two) and on the other hand there is no reason why these same facts should not "come across" as live ingredients if utilized in legitimate Scenes of the Play. Structurally speaking there are no Scenes in the first set scene of your Play. The bulk of it is conversational drift without a single Plot happening up until the entrance of the girl's betrayer. Here is where your Play should rightfully begin and with all the earlier part eliminated you would still have a full evening's performance. It is an abomination, anyhow, to divide an Act into set scenes! Employ the same constructive imagination that built the balance of your Play, in merging the valid conditions of your Plot into an unbifurcated first Act and you will have a mighty good example of modern playwriting!

In closing I will make one more observation. Your greatest Scene is between Mother and Daughter at end of II. The mother finds no wedding ring and the audience concludes at once that she fully detects the terrible truth. It should be clearly established that she still clings to the idea of her daughter's innocence or you lose considerable effectiveness at the height of this wonderful Scene. This and not the scene of the boy throwing a pitcher at the parading minstrel, is the final note for the Second Act.

Yours very sincerely,

THE EDITOR.

J U S T I C E . *

An Example of Overworked Theme.

From the title of John Galsworthy's new Play it might easily be suspected that the Author has a Theme to expound in Dramatic form. The first act of the Play supports this belief setting forth the Conditions of the Plot in the Englishman's best style. His dialog is a most superb specimen. The second act is a model trial Scene commendable for its unique device of breaking into the midst of the proceeding and consummating all in the way of prosecution that is necessary to the Problem. But the third! Three Set Scenes are devoted to exposing prison atrocities in the abstract with as little fidelity to Plot purpose as could be imagined were the author bent on evading it.

It is for this reason that we say theme is overworked. A dramatist may go mad over his theme without advancing Problem purpose one iota. The clever dialog in III, therefore, is nothing more than hollow harangue so far as the Play started in I and II is concerned. If the theme is to be utilized it must be dramatized. To spend two acts getting an audience into atmosphere identified with theme does not warrant an oration or essay on the subject, pending a final return to Play at the death moment of our hero.

The author's personal chat with us on the sins of omission in the treatment of prisoners substitutes the logical Conclusion of his Plot and affords an arbitrary ending without sufficient regard to denouement of Problem premises. The Play belongs in Three acts. The criminal punishment doctrine must be woven into the fibre of the Play if it is to be legitimately used. We advise all aspirants to read this Play. If you do not find it in the Library, ask your librarian to secure it. We find librarians accommodating in this respect. The Play is one particularly suited to reading. Closet Drama!

*Scribners, New York. Price 60c.

B A B Y M I N E .

Structurally, the Gem of the Season.

We dedicate this farce to our many subscribers who, without so excellent an example of ONE STORY drama might go on thru life skeptical of the possibility of building a Play upon a single solitary idea without dragging in a few foreign plotters to kill time. To kill time? "Baby Mine" hasn't a breathing spell. The farce is so full of its own theme that it overflows continually. But we cannot impress you, dear aspirant, that this is the case with your Play. No! No! Yours is a different problem. And instead of righteously spinning the legitimate material of your Plot you go wool gathering in the pastures of another flock. Set it down in your book of precepts, "To write a Play is to write about one thing and to write TWO Plays is to write about another THING."

And here let us note the fact that the ONE THING written about in this Gem of Construction is unfolded in THREE Acts. It is a strange but inevitable truth that the fewer things you have to present the fewer Acts you need to represent them. And when the Problem of a Play resolves itself into its minutest simplicity the only concern of the dramatist in dividing the Conflict into curtain epochs is to provide for lapse of time and change of scene. Of course, the highest pitch of Drama is suspense and the instinct of the Artist will instruct him to plunge his audience into this anxious experience while the curtain holds us for another round. Miss Margaret Mayo has accomplished this feat with exquisite discernment and projected unconscious anticipation into the following act after each ending with a pen full of the ink of Dramatic Essence.

Perhaps some of you think farce isn't drama? It ceases to be Drama only when it fails to become a Play. This is the case with too many of the season's earlier contributions. With the accepted theory that a farce is unlicensed horseplay, authors relax their qualms of Dramatic Conscience and descend into miserable absurdity and imbecility. When a farce follows the principles of play construction as rigidly as "Baby Mine" it falls as legitimately under the classification of Drama as a tragedy of the sombrest hue.

Problem.

Conditions: A husband leaves home.

Cause: The wife counterfeits motherhood.

Conclusion: The sham fatherhood reunites them.

This is the sum and substance of "Baby Mine" but of course, it gives no glimmering of the fun and uproar caused by the apparently thin situation. Miss Mayo leaves no stone of preparation unturned to make the absurdity real and her triumph is only a tribute to that supreme something we call A R T . We have always contended that Farce requires more Logic than Comedy. There is no better demonstration of this truth extant than the Play in question. The more preposterous the hypothesis the more rigid the demand for continual Cause and Effect—Cause and Effect—to bolster it up!

Even the fundamental criticism that such a Theme outrages motherhood is met by the Dramatist's quick precaution to create so shallow a "mother" as to dissolve all scruple in this particular. This same Art of taking infinite pains pervades the entire piece and is nowhere more welcome than in a letter writing episode at the end of Act I. The wife has been inoculated with the suggestion to feign this sham of motherhood. She "takes her pen in hand to say" 'My dear Alfred'—but instead of boring us with the traditional stage letter, the curtain descends with her elfish little laugh insinuating more mischief than words can convey. This is DRAMA! And it is in THREE Acts! It is the shortest three-act Play on record, actually playing one hour and ten minutes.

R E B E C C A O F S U N N Y B R O O K F A R M . A Simple Life Drama.

One of the most gratifying evidences of the season is the cordial welcome extended this little drama of rural life. It explores a new field for the Dramatist in that it brings to the theatre a class of spectators not reached by the average theatrical spellbinder. If you are not convinced of this fact go to the Republic Theatre and witness the crowds of thrifty, intelligent and cultured people entering this play house. Try to duplicate them anywhere in New York entertainments outside of an ethical society lecture. Note the contrast to that typically conventional audience attending all the other theatres. What is the answer? An exquisitely refreshing photograph of simple life represented upon the stage with absolute naturalness!

As a Play it has many flaws—it is a book Play—but it stands out in such happy contrast to the overstock of artificial representations of artificial life that it easily ranks first among the "mirror up to nature" products. And book writers who have anything like the child story ability of Kate Douglas Wiggin will do well to turn their novels into stage productions. It is to be hoped, however, that a better structural compass may be employed, for Mrs. Wiggin loses the path repeatedly and wanders from what might be a perfect Play into digressions of various degrees. To accomplish this disunity the

piece lives through four different acts and five set scenes. Much of this shifting could be avoided by adherence to the one legitimate Play story contained in the material.

What is this story? It is the youth of an ingenuous girl who, consigned to live with an irascible old aunt thoroughly transforms the crabbed lady's nature by the sunshine of her childish soul. But this does not include the love story, you will say? And this is not a Play, there is no Conflict. You are right on both counts. The love episode is no part of the Play material so far as the authors have fused it but a Conflict can readily be supplied and the love interest united by simply pitting the girl, her lover and her love against the aunt's will. What would be more natural than that the child fall in love with this hero and the aunt oppose them? The circuit of Conflict would then be complete. The two children against the aunt.

Of course the two foreign stories of Abner Simpson's theft as well as his illicit relations with a woman known as his wife are no factors in the real Play possibility. If they are to be preserved for their entertaining qualities they must become so much a part of Plot that structural progress is achieved by them. This might be hard to do—nothing is impossible—but the result might not pay for the labor. As a thoroughly new sort of regeneration Play the greatest value lies in the direct Conflict possible between the characters above mentioned. Undoubtedly Mrs. Wiggin wanted to weave in all the pretty little touches contained in her books, but she can't embrace all of them in all of her books and the illusion of Drama is just as surely disturbed by utilizing one false ingredient as by incorporating a thousand. The Play ceases to be a real Play the moment ONE streak of disunity obtrudes. When the Conditions of a consistent Conflict are once projected across the foot-lights, the audience should be put to sleep by the absolute harmony of every mental suggestion thereafter offered. To waken the spectator with a discordant note is to destroy the very illusion attempted! Oh, be humble, my brother, in your abject homage to U N I T Y ! For Unity implies a preservation of the Dramatic Illusion.

N O B O D Y ' S W I D O W .

Another Three-Act Play.

Without Mr. Belasco's Arch-craftsmanship Avery Hopwood's new Play might have been as shallow as "The Concert" under like circumstances. Both are Plays fortunate for falling into the hands of so expert an Artist of Stageology. The effort is far superior to the same author's "This Man and This Woman," but compared to "Seven Days" it is of flimsier fiber.

The greatest virtue in the whole structure is that the author imparts his secret to the audience instantly giving them superior knowledge to the other characters upon the stage. This is the essence of Dramatic CONFLICT and tends to demonstrate that the dramatist has learned a fundamental of his Science. Many writers of more merit juggle dangerously with this primal LAW only to find in the end that by withholding cardinal elements of DRAMA they destroy illusion, for the auditor is compelled to THINK consciously, whereas he should be allowed to DREAM subconsciously.

Another commendable feature in this farce is the absence of Horseplay. Mr. Hopwood relies more upon genuine fun, smart repartee and rational behavior for his laugh-producing formula. But of course, this palls after a time, particularly when we know that a man is flirting with his own wife from whom he is separated on an hypothesis so hollow that it echoes in repeated similarity of situation.

Early in the second Act the Play descends to salacious suggestion. The Problem bends from its original course, which concerns the reunion of husband and wife, branching off onto biplot of ready-made misunderstanding and still another biplot of an entirely separate love affair between others. Neither of these minor stories advance the action of the real play but so bewilder the mind of the auditor that the effect of Plot is badly diluted.

In the third Act salacious suggestion dominates all else, even the legitimate Conclusion of the Play which Plot would define as the reconciliation of the man and wife. Instead of contenting himself with this solution which is reached in their remarriage after a CABLED DIVORCE, the author needlessly dwells upon details of the marital relation which make his Play unfit for the younger generation and highly distasteful to the adult not steeped in lascivious depravity. Such sensualism would not come within the province of the analyst's pen were it a legitimate outcome of the play premises, but being a spurious factor it invites censure.

The Play is divided into THREE ACTS and the divisions are Logical. Many critics contend that you must divide the Conflict where the material demands. That is true, but in nine cases out of ten the Four Act Plays are arbitrarily divided and at least one of the Acts or one of the divisions is false treatment. We are not ready to advance the THREE ACT theory as a LAW but the observation of thousands of Plays with a greater number of acts tends to strengthen the theory. And if you, dear reader, think you can show us a Play legitimately divided into more than three epochs, apply for the verdict of "The DRAMATIST."

THE SQUAW MAN.

A Play of Artificial Foundation.

The DRAMATIST was not in existence when many of the Plays in this list were projected but we are glad to respond to the various requests of our patrons provided a performance or manuscript of the desired Play can be had.

This Play was a success in its day, but the few years intervening have brought radical changes of fashion dramatically. Frontier drama founded on fictitious episode is not in demand today as was demonstrated in the abrupt failure of "The Barrier" last season. And that drama was an exceptionally good example of the "wild and woolly." The taste of the playgoing public is evolving swiftly these days. It is this fact that makes the public's pulse so hard to take.

What are the features of this Play made obsolete in so brief a period? Characters depart from their impersonations and communicate direct with the audience. Others indulge in "asides" and follow the old school of "Exit speeches" purely for the purpose of EXPLAINING what the helpless author does not know how to send across the footlights by dramatic means. Letters are read aloud and eaves droppers are the rule, not the exception. When convenient for the author, one-half the stage doesn't hear what the other half says. Or they do hear, just as the case may be. After a lapse of two years, brothers and sisters do not know each other, even though they chance to meet five thousand miles from home. Is this holding the lookin' glass up to nature? The only mirror that will reflect such technic without a crack is the relic from grandma's toilet set.

But apart from these structural trivialities the Play has no thread of valid Plot to hang on. We are required to believe in the UNCAUSED death of a defaulting brother (off-stage) and the suicide of a dear little Indian mother in order that the former's buxom widow may wed the dead Indian's husband who is no less than her deceased husband's brother, remember, immorally in love with her brother-in-law from the start. Now what kind of mirror would reflect such Nature?

Besides this main story there are several biplots of murder and monstrosity which are mere products of a semi-concentrated imagination. It would hardly be worth while, you will admit, to go into a careful diagnosis of such a disease, for Nature could hardly duplicate such an affliction, and the remedy we might discover would not be applicable to other ailments. The highest service this Play can perform in present-day study is to stand as an example of negative qualities to be severely avoided. Its success will retard the author's progress if Mr. Royle accepts the verdict as a criterion to go by.

LEAH KLESCHNA.

A Play of Mixed Sequence.

You ask us to analyse a Play that has pretty well established itself in the good will of the playgoing public. Without denying the drawing qualities of the piece we will point out some very salient negatives that might add materially to its current success if transformed into positive structural elements.

The first and largest of these changes would be to reverse of acts III and IV, sequence being considerably off. This suggestion is not offered as a remedy but as a correction of the order of acts as they stand. The second is the elimination of the entire fifth act, which has nothing whatever to do with the Plot of the Play, but is a poetic sequel of the narrative order. After these operations are complete it would be well to go further and divide the Play into three Acts, doing away with most of Act IV concerning the father's solicitude for his daughter's absence, throwing the balance into III. The time and place for the girl to renounce her father and his crooked profession are in Paul Sylvain's home after he has caught her in the act of stealing. This would enhance Unity a hundred percent. As it is the fourth and fifth acts are more like the chapters in a novel than the sequenced acts of a Drama.

We will not dwell on this Play, for some of our readers may be unable to see or read it and much of the analysis would thereby be lost. There is considerable disunity in the two outside suitors for Leah's hand and if either is retained he should be entered into the initial Conflict of the Plot. The young journalist and his sweetheart introduced for the purpose of letting us know that the girl lives just down stairs, so that later reference to her quarters will be explanatory, is a pretty big dose of disunity to accomplish so small a point of preparation. Particularly is this true when the later reference to her quarters involves a further streak of disunity; the capture of Kleschna. This is not one of the purposes of the Plot, and all such misleading inferences tend to dilute the presentation of main Problem. The audience is quick to take cognizance of these little points and EXPECT an outcome. Their confidence is therefore betrayed to whatever extent the promise is made and not kept by the author.

Leah Kleschna contains stuff for an excellent Play. It is of the regeneration species and after all is said and done this purpose of reconstructing character in a Play is about the loftiest lesson a Plot can project! And since Human Nature likes to see herself eternally benefitted we have a union of moral and popular qualifications in the regeneration Play. If it is properly constructed it is far more effective than any

sermon could possibly be, for Dramatic Conflict communicates direct with the soul where oratory must pass thru the agency of the ear, requiring conscious attention and interpretation.

THE CALL OF THE WILD.

Frederick Remington's Novel Dramatized.

There may be several Plays of this name but we presume the one you mean is the book dramatized by Louis Ivan Shipman. The novel was called "John Ermine of the Yellowstone." The book is probably far better than the Play although we do not presume to judge the merit of fiction. The two arts are entirely separate and distinct although it appears to us that the one is as badly in need of the crusade of science as the other.

Unable to SEE the Play reposing in the material of the novel, Mr. Shipman blindly follows the story text oblivious to the necessity of pruning all that does not apply to the one Conflict between John Ermine and the conventional stage villain. We are perhaps literally wrong in saying that Remington's novel is DRAMATIZED for in the closer meaning of the term all that is lacking is dramatization. Proper dramatizing would do away with the needless Prologue which precedes the four long acts of the piece, converting yards of Talk into valid Dialog and vitalizing many plot essentials that are either related to the audience by means of conversation between characters or referred to as having happened BETWEEN ACTS!

This RECITATIVE process is carried out to a finish. An old man pipes a most distressing monologue of past history in the first scene and then relates the history of his own life in the last act. Neither of these Te Deums are of value to the Play which should be enacted HERE and NOW. The hero finds a photograph and then falls in love with the original. We would be much more persuaded of the reality if we SAW this fellow pick up the lady's likeness and the old man's effort to explain what a picture is would bring forth all the antecedents required. The old man would then be speaking BECAUSE he had to and not because the AUTHOR desired to push certain information across the footlights as an apology for more enlightened treatment.

The Play is full of these undramatized flaws and contains some bigger violations of technic. Any attempt to stage the traditional Conflict between villain and hero "for the hand of the gueirl—l!" is pre-doomed to melodramatic destiny. Modern audiences have tabooed this form of false Art and only the hard-of-hearing can fail to interpret the signs of the times.

The "Call of the Wild" is thus handicapped and on top of this is the conflicting character of the hero who in one act compromises the character of the heroine unwittingly and in the next suddenly exercises the finest discretion of sentimental deportment. Charles Klein says that Playwriting has made more advance in the last decade than in the eighteen centuries preceding. We almost feel like abbreviating his term decade and saying the last three years. This Play is a victim of the species outclassed by evolution!

E N C H A I N E D .

Published in the July 1910 Number.*

The following is a revision of Scene I, Act III of Hervieu's play printed in our July issue. We asked for suggestions from our subscribers and this was submitted by Edward Gruse, of Revillo, South Dakota.

Irene—May I assist you?

Fergan—You need not, as I know where every volume belongs. You might go and prepare tea.

Irene—'Tis early, but I'm hungry myself so I'll prepare our lunch before the usual hour. Is there any special dish you desire?

Fergan—Oh, no, anything you have handy will do.

Irene—It will take but a few moments, then. (Exit Irene)

(Enter Valantin with fishing rod)

Val—Are you busy?

Fergan—I have accustomed myself to such task since our arrival here ten years ago.

Val—Is she still unfaithful and ill-willed?

Fergan—More neglected than unfaithful and ill-willed and whatever one neglects adds to another's burden.

(Enter Rene)

Rene—Tea is ready, papa.

Fergan—All right, I'll be there. (Exit Rene)

Val—How the boy grows!

Fergan—Yes, he is not our only cause for difference between us. Irene does not wish to send him away from home for his education and I have resolved to send him away to the college of St. Christopher, where I mean to convey him tonight.

Val—So soon?

Fergan—Ay! But I will not approach Irene with my decision until the last moment.

*See page 58

Val—Send him without her consent?

Fergan—So is my purpose, he must receive proper instruction. But come, Valanton, have tea with us.

Val—No, thank you. I lunched before I came and I've delayed here now too long.

Fergan—Well, I will not detain you, then.

(Exit Valanton.)

Besides showing time and place, this first scene should above all, carry its purpose, which is to show that Irene and Fergan renew their quarrel in the instance of Rene's leave for college. Time is established by the fact that they have a young son. But the son should enter early in Act III. Mr. Gruse has accomplished this requisite in excellent fashion. He does not show Place and the original only shows it in a very haphazard fashion of dialog between one principal and one character in no wise concerned with the Problem. Purpose is Talked by Mr. Gruse same as M. Hervieu. The talk could not become dialog until it is the inevitable thing—until they are forced to talk it and this is not the case in original nor revision. We are not analysing the above attempt at scene further than the achievement of purpose. Irene's tea talk is contradictory. We would think she and Fergan on the chummiest terms. The flat statement of the renewed quarrel over the boy is all wrong. Visualize this contention. Let us SEE it. Try again, Mr. Gruse.

A further study of the Act leads us to believe that Scenes I, II, III and V are spurious. These do nothing but attempt a forecast of what is going to happen. If the act opened with Scenes IV and VI we would have all that we, the audience require for interpretation of time, place and purpose and the Plot would be intensified by the fact that we see it unfold BEFORE US. With all due respect to M. Hervieu's argument, there is no value in predicting happenings by mere talk in advance. Let the fight proceed!

Disunity of Enchained.

We have spent so much space in discussing this Scene I that we have little left for Unity. In a word, the greatest breach of Unity is the link out of the story that should inform the audience of Rene's illicit parenthood. The surprise is for Fergan, not us, and Interest is diluted by our ignorance. Master this first essence of DRAMA!

T H E F I R E C O M M I S S I O N E R .

By Harrison Armstrong

This sketch is appearing on the Keith circuit and gives considerable evidence of structural knowledge and experience. It

deals with a far more ambitious theme than the average playlet. *Civic Graft!* But theme is not allowed to predominate as it should and two distinct plots cleverly interwoven in an attempt to embrace more than one main idea, operate to the distraction of thought in the audience. The mightiest genius under the sun could not accomplish this feat without subordinating one plot by means of making it advance the action of the other.

One plot concerns a boy's determination to become a hero in order to win his hero-worshipping sweetheart. The author's impatience would not allow him to wait the natural order of introducing the sweetheart and her heroic proclivities in the person of the little lass herself—he must falsely substitute her by monologue and telephone talk before we have made her acquaintance. In the conclusion of this first plot the boy "makes good" by a hair-breadth rescue of his heroine from a fire that takes place OUT of the Play. Moral: Let the Play take place ON the stage!

The second plot deals with legitimate theme; a minister compelling a fire commissioner to resign from office by means of telephonic communication of a fire in which his daughter is being consumed as a direct result of his grafting mismanagement of fire-fighting apparatus.

The telephone is a more visual means of making the fire a factor in the plot but it remains a makeshift at best. An attempt at descriptive reproduction of the terrific conflagration for the benefit of the audience endangers a descent to the ridiculous. Several snickers in the audience announce the fate that awaits the false conduct of characters or false effect attempted by the playwright's mechanism.

The sketch is well worth studying. Harrison Armstrong will bear watching as one of the best builders of the better grade of vaudeville Acts that grip.

I N T E R V I E W E D .

Published in November Smart Set.

Like "The Fire Commissioner" this is a sketch worth reading. It has been tried out in Chicago, we understand, but found wanting in certain fundamental principles. It has a Theme much like the other sketch referred to but is much more concentrated in Unity.

The chief violation is the omission of Conditional information that should get into the mind of the audience early in the Play. We refer to the identity of the officer who calls to arrest Miss Hale, the supposed burglar, and her fiance. They are one and the same but the big opportunity to establish this fact while she is talking to her editor on the telephone is lost.

To the novelist's mind it would seem a pity to waste this SURPRISE which might be sprung to advantage on the individual reader, but to the dramatist such a suppression is damaging to the interpretation of his Play. In fact it is the first essential of presentation. It is an ingredient in PLOT that cannot be replaced by the empty suspense or surprise manufactured by the absence of any information as to the policeman's relation to Miss Hale. It resolves itself, then, into a choice between two suspenses. Empty or full! For surely the audience cannot nourish the hope that her lover will save the day unless they KNOW that she has planned with him to respond to the call.

Besides this giant transgression there are little deficiencies, such as the impossible telephone talk at the beginning which might mar the opening effect. And here the author makes or breaks in the brief time allotted to vaudeville skits. The Business of breaking into the house, is excellent for it creates SUSPENSE at once. On the whole the Act is miles above the average and could be made into a perfect gem with little variation.

Subscribers are invited to state their choice of sketches to be analysed in this department. Particularly the printed Acts are desirable, for the subscriber may then refer to the score.

Playwriting

Are you satisfied with the progress you are making as a playwright? Are you content to spend the best years of your life in an effort to master dramatic composition? Are you content to continue in the bitter and gruelling school of experience of the "try, try again"—hit or miss theory? Or are you willing to take a short cut to the mastery of your Art?

The majority of Authors who arrive on the Metropolitan stage bring with them the history of fifteen to twenty years' hard struggle with the mysteries of the Craft. This has been the case with Fitch, Thomas, Pinero, Shaw and Walter. It is this long period of helpless preparation that the Institute of the Drama is designed to avert.

Let us tell you of the invaluable service the Institute renders the aspiring Playwright—how we help develop the abilities and possibilities of the young Dramatist—how we perfect a play into scientific and saleable form—and how you may add to your fund of practical information, knowledge that you can apply to the very play you are building—knowledge that will place you years in advance of your normal development as a Dramatist.

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Technical Tendencies

There is a prevalent tendency to confuse the province of technic with prophecy. A miserable botch of play construction may meet with popular approval. A technically good Play may not. This is no conclusive argument against dramatic science. The timely subject alone may draw the crowd. A group of actors might merely recite a story and still excite interest. A dozen different ingredients may effect popular acceptance while none of these need concern technic. The fact that a man speaks coherent English without strict adherence to grammar need not condemn the underlying science of language. In each instance it is the standard of the art we strive to exalt. What the majority approves is not the criterion of science.

It is a great pleasure, nevertheless, to observe that popular demand for Drama coincides with the tendency toward technically improved playwriting. This is shown by the preponderance of good modern structural specimens in the list of record-breaking runs in New York to-day. "The Concert," "Nobody's Widow," "Get Rich Quick Wallingford" and "The Gamblers" are all types of the simplicity Drama. "Baby Mine," the Play we have already awarded the highest technical place, takes the lead in the race for longevity in this country and has since met with high favor in London! The only pronounced violation of good technic that holds its own with these, is "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm." This wonderful stage picture wins through truthful portrayal of comely and homely humanity.

We regret that we are unable to treat such pieces as "Chantecler," "The Blue Bird," "The Piper," "Everywoman," "The Arrow Maker," "The Faun" and "The Scarecrow." But these are essentially undramatic. They partake of the spectacular, the fantastic or the poetic and do not conform to the science of Play Construction.

In the July, 1911, issue, we will publish and analyze a sketch from the Swedish by Strindberg, for the first time done into English.

AS A MAN THINKS.

A Play for Thinking Playgoers.

The success of Augustus Thomas' new Play would seem to demonstrate the fact that there are enough thinking people in the great city of New York to furnish audiences for one intellectual orator presenting his lecture in dialog form. This is not altogether conclusive, however. The alternative flattery of Gentile and Jew is a salient box office feature. Undoubtedly the piece appeals to a select class of individuals of predominant mental temperament but like "The Melting Pot" it tempts the Hebrew auditor who relishes the idea of a public vindication of his race. "As a Man Thinks" goes even further. The Jew is appointed to exalt the religion of the Gentile, so both sides win!

We have ever contended that a real Play is for the composite-imagination of an audience, not for the speculative mind of the individual. There is little in this noteworthy production that resembles Drama. The first and last Acts are hopelessly ill. They need some of the surplus mental healing dogma dispensed in the text. Mr. Thomas continues to mistake fiction and oratory for Play Construction. It is only in Scene building that he conforms to Dramatic method.

Problem.

Conditions: A wife is compromised with an old lover.

Cause: The husband doubts his own parentage of her child.

Conclusion: It is proved that the lover is innocent.

This is about as near as Science can come to a syllogism of the Play. The romantic tribulations of gentile boy and Hebrew girl are not embraced in it. The two stories are entwined with evident notion that they are correlated and interdependent. Under the existing form of the structure we admit that the second story stimulates the first. But treatment is wrong! The conclusion is not legitimately reached. It is obtained by establishing the fact that the lover was in prison at the time the child was conceived. Therefore, he is not the father of it! But how can a fact not in the Play solve its Problem? We cannot emphasize too forcefully that all of the incidents vital to Plot should transpire IN THE PLAY and on the stage. To depend upon reviving precedent history for the promotion of Plot is a flimsy device unworthy the modern dramatist.

Mr. Thomas may never master this fundamental of his Art. He gives no evidence in his later Plays that it is his desire to Dramatize ALL of the action. He follows the time-honored

method of TELLING one fragment and recalling ancient history for another. Like Thespis, (500 B. C.) he elects one character to voice the author's sentiments. The Jewish physician who performs this part in the present production is not a principal in the cast. He has no direct connection with the Play. He performs his mental miracles much to the embarrassment of the probability of Plot and travels through four long Acts unmotived, actuated expressly by the commands of the author behind him.

The one surpassing trait of Augustus Thomas is his Scene building ability. He has mastered this important factor of Drama to such a degree that he can write an admirable Scene in perfect Unity unto itself no matter how literally it violates that larger Unity of the entire structure. With a clearer definition of what constitutes a Play this author might rank easily the first in the land. So long as he employs the sermonistic method he fosters the supremacy of Mayo, Klein and Walter. But Heaven help the others if Thomas once turns loose on a real Play. We believe he could build one if he would come down out of the pulpit!

T H E B O S S .

Mr. Sheldon's Descent to the Commercial.

Despite the fact that Mr. Sheldon has listened longingly to the rustle of the dollar bill his play contains one or two Scenes of intrinsic merit which as isolated specimens bid for gradual Dramatic growth. The Play falters hopelessly about waiting for the word "go" until the "boss" enters and the first Act commits breach of promise in its exposition of Conditions that are never to be fulfilled.

The proposal of a corrupt financier for the daughter of the cultured man he has completely ruined is a progressive situation to be reached in the first Act of a Play. This is one of the clever Scenes, this bold wooing, but its effect is shattered by an abrupt and illogical consummation of the match and an utter destruction of perspective. The author ducks the problem plainly prescribed by his own Plot, and sinks his principals into the matrimonial sea and wanders off in a theatrical airship after half a dozen other plotlets of irrelevant purpose.

The first of these spurious entanglements is a "wife in name only" arrangement made to solace the supposed social aspirations of the "boss" thereby averting her father's bankruptcy. We learn later that the "boss" detests all social functions and whether the father's financial condition is benefitted by the transaction "the deponent sayeth not."

The second offshoot is the labor and capital complication into which the wife is plunged at the author's election, suddenly becoming the sympathetic sister of all suffering humanity. On this byroad of Plot the hero encounters an infuriated mob of strikers whom he successfully subdues to the sound of a pin drop by the heroic flashing of a magazine pistol. But this is the stage carpenter's joke, it can't be Mr. Sheldon's.

The next fragment is the husband's arrest for the murder of the wife's brother who had continued to operate against the "boss" despite the fact that the sister had been sacrificed in marriage to replenish the family purse. With all his money the magnate can secure no bail even though he is an abettor in the crime at best.

The fourth conflict is an original drama between church and capital. The "boss" deceives his priest as to his attitude toward the striking laborers and the wife betrays him. He now defies the father, who, in one of the cleverest bits of Scene structure subjugates his parishioner by the power of his position.

And there is still another phase of the sociological situation. This is strictly capital and labor. In order to defeat the striking workmen the "boss" will escape to Canada where he will transfer the chief industry thereby impoverishing his native town to tantalize his enemies.

The sixth and last Plot caps the climax of inconsistencies. This tangent deals with the regeneration of the corrupt "husband in name only." The wife now offers to swap her sex, a commodity she had vowed never to include in the matrimonial bargain, if he will merely show clemency to the poor laborers whom she so sociologically loves! Wouldn't this satisfy the greed of a melodramatic gormandizer?

Could anything be more ludicrous to the analyst than this perpetual shift of Plot purpose? None of the above items are successfully joined. With proper correlation this might be accomplished, but it would make a complex Plot. There is a growing demand for Plays with a purpose. Mr. Sheldon has met the market with a supply of six-in-one. The defect arises in the author's inability to define his Problem which invariably results in disunity. "One Plot at a time, &c," is as true of Drama as anything else.

But let us say something good of "The Boss." The name-character of the Play is drawn with unusual fidelity at certain moments of portrayal. For isolated instances Mr. Sheldon has done few Scenes better than the two commended in this article. The valid Problem of his Play would make a powerful Drama. Its richest resources are what "it might have been." The legitimate Problem follows.

Problem.

Conditions: A corrupt financier seeks the daughter whose family he has impoverished.

Cause: His love for the girl regenerates his soul.

Conclusion: Her pride gives way to this transformation of character.

T H E H A V O C .

New Type Advocated by The DRAMATIST.

A Play built about one Theme, divided into Three Acts and played by only four characters is precisely near the high Dramatic Standard held by this journal without further technical qualifications. Add to this, a clever Plot, adequate Sequence, marvellous restraint, excellent Scene structure, keen suspense, picturesque Diction and spontaneous Dialog and "The Havoc" may safely be classed with the foremost models of Play Construction.

"Baby Mine" is the only dangerous rival of this newest masterpiece and the novitiate will do well to follow both these technical patterns of Comedy and Farce. They are early types of the New Drama now dawning; the Drama we have so long been heralding. The laws of Play Construction have been obeyed and utilized and this legitimate product is the inevitable result.

It is interesting to note how this new type by H. S. Sheldon, effects the opinion of the professional writer. Channing Pollock, who hitherto has scoffed the idea of technic, calls this model: "Amazingly clever in every respect." Margaret Mayo, who has written the only rival, merely says: "Tremendous!" Edgar Selwyn: "A Bully Good Play." Charles Klein: "The best constructed Play I have ever seen." Charles Rann Kennedy. "A remarkable Play of absorbing interest." George Broadhurst: "A most extraordinary and brilliant Play."

This undissenting acclaim is no mean tribute to Dramatic Technic! It is none the less potent for being unconscious. None of these Dramatists knew they were exalting Dramaturgic Science. It is not the technic but its effects that they extol! The Playwright doesn't even know he is conforming to the Laws when he builds a Play. But he never builds a good one without so doing. And only a Play with Scientific requisites could enlist this chorus of professional approval!

P R O B L E M .

Conditions: A paramour steals the wife of an honest man.

Cause: The man accedes the outrage.

Conclusion: His sanction proves the surer cure.

The gravest violation of Principle in this Play is the disunity involved in the denouement or conclusion. The husband's compliance does work a cure but through a means in slight disparity to Conditions and Cause. Instead of allowing the premises to generate the Conclusion by specifically disproving the paramour's perverted philosophy the author trumps up a foreign device—showing the latter's defalcation in a railroad office. This Conclusion has no bearing on the premises.

Apart from this there is little structural criticism possible. Fault might be found with the author's Logic in allowing a man to swap his wife for the mere purpose of demonstrating the other fellow's selfishness, but this treatment is largely a matter of taste where no criterion holds. The situation could be strengthened by giving added motive to the husband's conduct.

It is a lapse of Art to split an Act in two parts, all vain excuses to the contrary! Instead of leaping the problem by a drop of the curtain the author should work it out! In the first Act the splice is made to provide time for the husband to proceed to the railroad station and return, unexpectedly, catching the imposter in his lady's chamber. The author has taken for granted there is no alternative. It is not vitally essential to Plot that the man be gone several hours before he finds he has taken the wrong book. It is not necessary that the poor little wife be actually caught in bed with her lover. This is a needless lapse into lust. It is not required by the Plot and the wife is robbed of sympathy by this treatment. The competent craftsman who built this Play could bridge this gap in an hour's study.

In Act II the same criticism holds. The curtain is obviously dropped to provide opportunity for the remarried wife to be compromised in the second husband's eyes by the equivocal presence of her former spouse. It doesn't require any great length of time to accomplish this feat. Exactly the same situation could be attained without dispatching both men to their clubs while the curtain is down. Again we say the same genius that created far better emergencies in the Play could readily invent some slight turn by which this breach in the Dramatic illusion might be averted. It is his indifference to these defects that we deplore. Fight out your Plot, Mr. Sheldon.

But this is base ingratitude to the Dramatist who has furnished us a splendid play of modern Construction. It is equivalent to defiling our own god—Technikos! Hats off to "The Havoc," a play many miles in advance of the procession!

THE TWELVE POUND LOOK.

Barrie's Ascent to the Psychological.

The new one-act sketch by J. M. Barrie does not bear a striking resemblance to Dramatic Composition. There must be some sort of combat in a real Play, between the opposed wills of the principles and this combat must be a thing of the present moment. The playlet in question departs from this immutable law in that it is wholly an account of a conflict of past performance. In this respect it is much like *Fritzchen*, by Sudermann, analyzed in this same issue.

Another salient flaw is that the characters are not motived. The author places them on the stage for reasons best known to himself and propels them of his own volition instead of theirs. They recite his far-fetched moral in an obedient fashion telling us that a husband's surplus of the success microbe will drive his first wife to the bitter extreme of buying a sixty dollar typewriter and cause his second spouse to envy her predecessor's contented twelve pound countenance.

Of course it would be an irksome task for a man of Barrie's wit to compose lines in the English Language that were not gently tuned to the key of comedy. To hint that the "sixty dollar look" is not a legitimate Dramatic grimace need not signify that the little piece fails to entertain such members of the audience as direct their intellects to the construction of that feature of the Dramatic illusion usually assigned to the author. An anecdote may please if it is merely told by a single person. Put the same yarn into the mouths of a dozen puppets to represent the various characters concerned, however, and you do not necessarily construct a Drama by the mere act of dialoging. Alfred Sutro's "A Maker of Men" reported in our July, 1910, number, is the only one-act piece we can think of that compares with Mr. Barrie's latest effort for absolute absence of Dramatic quality.

U. S. MINISTER BEDLOE.

A Frivolous Tailor-Made Farce.

If George Ade's past dramatic work has been conspicuous for one thing more than another it is the absence of tangible Plot. In "U. S. Minister Bedloe" he is seized with the sudden desire to incorporate this disregarded ingredient. The result is a hodgepodge of conventional theoric contortions serving mainly to obscure the author's native wit.

"The College Widow," by the same author, was a pronounced hit because, like "Rebecca of Sunny Brook Farm," it conveys to the stage curtain glimpses of atmosphere with telling reality. At the Art of capturing atmosphere Mr. Ade is

an adept but no degree of efficiency in this particular equips a man for the subtle secrets of Play Construction. At best this faculty is an adjunct to Playwriting.

Truthful reproduction of interesting pictures from life is one thing and the building of that concrete something known as Drama, is quite another. A specific train in the latter craft is the only means of efficiency. Mr. Ade will have to go through the same course of sprouts if he is ever to become a Dramatist.

The attempt at Plot in this piece has not only marred the native wit of the author, it has seduced his sense of comedy and character. In several instances he descends to vapid puns, cheap caricature and horseplay. There is no explanation for this extravagance, save the misconception that this is playwriting. It would be impossible to reduce this thing to Problem. It is merely a series of disordered circumstances.

THE DEEP PURPLE.

Dime Novel Melodrama.

There is but one infallible method of testing the constitution of a Play: strike its Proposition and see how nearly same has been adhered to. When a piece is improperly constructed there is no Problem and the next test is to find the nearest approach to syllogism contained in the undeveloped material. What the Armstrong-Mizner Play intended to be is as follows:

Problem.

Conditions: A girl is used as a decoy to trap a man of wealth.

Cause: The man detects his danger through her innocent incompetence.

Conclusion: They operate in unison to escape a common plight.

Let us now trace the meandering of the authors from the course of their evident intentions. The Cause, or middle clause of Problem, is the core of any Play. This transcendent feature of Construction is devitalized just at the moment Plot is ripening. Instead of building the tremendous Scene called for in the very nature of their materials, at the moment this man discovers his danger through the innocence of the girl who has lured him into this den, (thinking she is honestly aiding the crook who masquerades as her lover) the authors undermine the magnificent situation by having the hero forewarned of his danger. And this news is spread by a character in no wise essential to the Plot.

Here is an excellent instance of demolished interest! To inform the man of his impending danger robs the Scene of its force. The audience should know his imminent peril, but absolute ignorance on the part of the victim is the very keynote of SUSPENSE! Consider the thrill of heart throbs generated by this man's entrance into the trap we set for him! "What will he do? How will he protect his life—his money? What about the innocent girl, when she finds it her lover's purpose to rob and plunder? Will they turn on her? Will he come to her rescue?" &c., &c. These are the test questions of Dramatic Action! For Action transpires in the audience not on the stage!

How utterly vapid is the traditional trick of getting the drop on the culprit compared with the magnificent opportunity afforded at this juncture for real Dramatic Composition? The authors take the girl back to the hero's hotel for mamma to care for. The real Plot of fleecing the hero subsides and several spurious remnants sprout up. The hero has a convenient friend in the police department who believes the girl a crook too. The Conclusion of this new Problem would be: Can the hero prove her innocence? A new Plot is necessary to put this Problem to the test and money is placed in a convenient spot to tempt the girl. Of course the girl is proof against this pitfall but the authors think it necessary to carry on a little contest of their own between the hero and the police official.

Another Plot brings us to the end. The girl is told by telephone that she will meet her beloved father if she will return to a favorite haunt of the crook's. Of course she is fool enough to go at once, despite the provision of the message that she must come "alone!" Naturally the crook awaits her, but her doom is not quite sealed. A rescue falls from the clouds in the form of an ex-convict with a well grown grudge against the villain! Our new found friend has a perfectly legitimate existence in a secondary Plot that we forgot to mention. Suffice it to say that the secondary supplement belongs to an entirely separate performance and that still another complication caused by the obvious swapping of revolvers has no place in any of the numerous offshots we have named.

That such a vapid composition of puerile sensation will attract the indiscriminate crowd, there can be little doubt. To classify it as Drama would be equivalent to letting in the whole realm of yellow-back fiction on the same footing. "The Deep Purple" is much worse structure than "Alias Jimmy Valentine" with no big Scene to redeem it.

NOBODY'S DAUGHTER.

A Splendid Play Possibility.

It is so seldom that we find plays of simple centred composition that it is indeed painful to see one of these go to pieces for want of dramatic treatment. "Nobody's Daughter" sticks to one thing and would get there if the two largest moments of Suspense were not ignored.

Two young people become the illicit parents of a child and afterward marry other mates. The man who later marries the woman endeavors to solve the mysterious parenthood of this child. In a beautifully built scene he tears down the fabrication that is supposed to explain her birth. He detects the wife's overeagerness to answer questions asked of others and justly suspects her of some guilt. But here the valid Scene development halts, and with no shadow of suspicion cast upon the real father of the child the husband flies off into a scene-eating fit accusing him of the deed—a paradise for the actor.

The next best bit of technical abuse is the preposterous manner of breaking the news to the woman now the wife of the illicit father. It doesn't break, "she knew it all the time." The fact is plumped in without asking leave of the audience. The woman divines it. We know not how.

But we still maintain that the Play scheme is an ambitious one. The Problem is exquisitely defined and the Theme takes its genesis in the third law of Nature. The love of mother and child. This law is a powerful emotional agent and probably dramatized makes for Drama in the first degree. Mr. George Paston has missed the mark in "Nobody's Daughter," but his effort is honest and sincere.

THE CONCERT.

A Drama With Farcical Finish.

"The Concert" is a one-story composition that threatens to become Drama at one moment and falls into utter farce at another. From the underlying Problem it will be seen that the Theme lends itself to a fine Play formula.

PROBLEM.

Conditions: A doctor intercepts his wife's seduction.

Cause: He will not impede her happiness.

Conclusion: His cool head causes their reconciliation.

The Problem does not embrace the musician's wife nor the Doctor's pretended love for her. These are details of Plot development. The chief factor in the Play is the broad-minded

Doctor. For farcical reasons he has been subdued and the dialect character brought to the front.

This arbitrary sacrifice of the Conflict character doubtless accounts for the premature explosion of Plot. Act II carries the Conflict far beyond culminating moment and the Play is virtually over before the second curtain descends. The author, the audience and the characters have all reached a common point of view which necessarily puts an end to Dramatic Conflict. There is no further doubt as to the issue and any effort to prolong cross-purposes is an obvious play for "laughs."

That the effort is rewarded, there is not the slightest doubt. The box office yields the ultimate evidence. This fact would seem to outweigh all other argument but it can not down the definition of Drama. The same comic element prevails light opera, vaudeville and musical farce. It is the Play alone that employs this fun to the concentrated purpose of promoting Plot. With very slight modification "The Concert" could be remodeled into this fuller definition of Drama. Act II could be ended at the highest moment of suspense and the vital misconception might be legitimately sustained until a timely denouement. The Play has an excellent moral. What we deplore is the fact that its fun can not be devoted to exploiting the author's concealed philosophy to its fullest force.

THE DARK LADY OF THE SONNETS.

Bernard Shaw's Soliciting Skit.

In the "Red Book Magazine" for January is a typical Shaw product accompanied by an excellent portrait of the great writer. No one can accuse Shaw of writing without a purpose—at least his own purpose. On the contrary Theme is usually so paramount as to gobble up every other principle of Play Construction. It is a good example of Theme for Theme sake.

In the present instance there is no exception to this rule. His aim is to make an indirect appeal to the English people for contributions to the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre fund. After a preliminary skirmish with characters who threaten to construct a semblance of Plot he achieves his purpose admirably without recourse to Dramatic Method. The early portion of the skit is nothing more than a game of words—Shakespeare's words—and the subtle suggestion by which the audience is moved to feelings of financial offertory is nothing but abstract dialog devoid of dramatization!

Shakespeare: Therefore must your majesty take up the good work that your church hath abandoned and restore the art of playing to its former use and dignity.

Elizabeth . . . I tell thee Master Will it will be three hundred years and more before my subjects learn that man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that cometh

from the mouth of those whom God inspires. By that time you and I will be dust beneath the feet of the horses, if indeed there be any horses then, and men be still riding instead of flying. Now it may be that by then your works will be dust also.

Shakespeare: They will stand, madam: fear not for that.

Elizabeth: It may prove so. But of this I am certain (for I know my countrymen) that until every other country in the Christian world even to barbarian Muscovy and the hamlets of the boorish Germans, have its playhouse at the public charge, England will never adventure. And she will adventure then only because it is her desire to be ever in the fashion, and to do humbly and dutifully whatso she seeth everybody else doing. But this I will say, that if I could speak across the ages to our descendants, I should heartily recommend them to fulfil your wish, . . . &c.

This is a pungent thrust, eh?

There is no denying the salesmanship of such persuasive words on the lips of the reincarnate Queen. The sketch serves the double purpose of its pecuniary appeal for donations and its proceeds resulting from the production itself. But the dramatic element is inconsequent. Plot takes on no shadow of a Conflict and what Dramatic Suspense there might be is dashed to pieces by the false promise of a mix-up between the "Dark Lady" and the "Cloaked" one.

The nearest approach to Interest is generated by the precedent knowledge in the minds of the audience concerning the historic associations of these immortal personages. The author leaves us to construct our own little play of solitaire. He has built nothing for our reconstructive imaginations to react upon. The materials are offered and we must picture the illusion for ourselves exactly as we perform this operation in the reading of a book of fiction. It is in this respect that the skit departs from dramatic form and assumes the nature of a dialogued oration. It is a clever duet of recitals at best and demonstrates the possibilities of the writer who confuses the province of Play with that of the Propagandist.

D R I F T I N G .

Better Than the Turning Point.

The best that can be said of "Drifting" is that it surpasses, anatomically, anything that Mr. Gibson has done. A very flimsy Conflict is skilfully divided into three legitimate Acts. This is a tremendous improvement over the act divisions of "The Turning Point" which the author gave us last season. But the content of these acts is so hollow that enhanced framework is of little avail.

And why is it hollow? Because the Play is founded upon a character in whose existence the audience cannot believe. And why can't they believe in her? Because she is painfully unsophisticated and no CAUSE is ascribed for this abnormality. There should be some logical reason for her utter absence of common sense. Is it her early training or environment? Some radical precedent condition must account for this banal imbecility!

How many thousand men and women would be cross-examined before finding one credulous enough to swallow the tale that a bride of 20 could be senseless enough to accept a check from a man obviously conniving to alienate her affections from her husband? Of course, a Dramatist could build up a situation that would justify such procedure but would sane human beings stand for it in a bride who adores her husband and whose only purpose in accepting the check is to make good an overdraft at bank notwithstanding the fact that hubby has money to burn and that there has been no demand made upon her for the account by the bank officials? There are a thousand ways in which she could escape this trap the author so obviously sets for her.

Upon this empty situation the climax of the entire structure hangs! But this is not the end of the author's arbitrary plotting. The occasion of the husband's discovery of this check is just as bald. There is no attempt to develop Suspense. The wife has every reason to conceal this incriminating evidence, particularly in the presence of her husband, but she doesn't! The author's purpose is paramount. Plot for plot sake! Without the slightest reason, the husband remarks: "What is that paper?" He knows that there is something wrong in that paper because the author wants him to know and for no other earthly reason. The wife gasps and sputters for the same reason. The author needs such a device!

The same brand of inconceivable innocence characterizes every move that wifie makes. She isn't modeled after types we meet in life. She is the irresponsible essence of comic opera. In creating "Trency" Mr. Gibson has run the gamut of unreality—the direct antithesis of the Dramatist's goal. Her paramour is of a similar species—an indescribable cad—a caricature of stageland.

"Drifting" is better than "The Turning Point" for several reasons. Plot is confined to ONE STORY save for a dash of disunity in the way of a subsidiary story of the preposterous blandishments of a frisky divorcee who coolly calculates upon marrying a married man to repair her depleted purse. There is a moment of dramatic merit in Act III that deserves comment. The foolish bride is about to elope with the cause of all

her trouble when husband intercepts. By honest Scene Construction the author achieves his purpose of persuading the wife not to go by giving the husband every appearance of sanctioning the excursion. Her conversion is convincing and this bit of Art is the one redeeming feature in the play that differentiates it from the enforced performance of any other amateur effort providing the wherewith to produce were forthcoming.

T W O W O M E N .

An Experiment With Two Plots.

Mr. Rupert Hughes betrays an appalling ignorance of the province of a Play in attempting to unite the fragments of two Plots, neither of which possesses Dramatic quality in itself and combined have less. Henry Fielding once wrote a comedy called "Pasquin," which bordered on the double Plot idea, but this comprised the rehearsal of two plays cleverly embodied in one satirical Theme. We merely mention it as a structure worth reading.

That a chaste wife may set a standard by which her prostitute successor must be measured up for regeneration is the chief idea of this new Play. The thematic intention is further confirmed by its title: "Two Women."

By far the greatest service performed in such a piece is the profit of experience to manager and star. It is difficult to conceive even an Actress taking hold of such a thing seriously, but a semblance of strong situation ever appeals to the Thespian blinding him to the predominant flaws of technic. Recall the instance of a star of Sothern's magnitude writing and staging "The Light that Lies in a Woman's Eyes." It was a stupid school boy's make-believe. All of which goes to show that the actor does not know Drama as well as he scents a fat part. It plainly demonstrates the advisability of managers and stars studying the fundamentals of Play Construction in self defense! This is particularly true of those who enter into the joint profits of production with money to lose!

Besides having no tangible Plot this fabric lacks Conflict, the one first requisite of Drama. There is no conscious contention of any sustained sort. The story of the Play is undramatized, in other words, and reels off the author's pen like any other narrative.

An artist with a "history" marries a chaste seamstress who dies just as he comes into his fortune. He finds a dance hall Harlot who closely resembles the lamented. The author evidently intends us to swallow the plotty pill that the spirit of the dead wife now takes a hand in the miracle. For the widower has no intention of mating with the prostitute. He

merely wishes to pose her for a portrait of the departed. The demi-monde has no premeditated designs on the artist till she contracted a habit of buying him neck ties and half-hose in wholesale quantities. She then suddenly finds him a miscreant for not marrying her on the spot to rescue her from her former companions! And here we have Mrs. Carter's thrilling situation! The wouldn't be lovers dash in and out of the tender passion current for the transparent purpose of intermittent agony. The traditional tempest in a tea-pot. The heroine is a veritable suffragette suitoress! She pops the question more than once! And this frenzied furore was once "the real thing" in melodrama.

But let us go on with the story. The strumpet goes back to her former keeper and the artist's attorney follows her with a pension proposal. A moment later the artist himself appears in the private apartments of the villain! The "willin" is drunk! They quarrel! (Situation #2 and fully as logical as the first). These poor devils don't know why they fight, but like obedient puppets that they are, carry out the spasms inspired in the mighty genius of the Playwright, for inspiration number two tells him that this is the geographical moment for a duel! And so he says, "Sick 'em"—sober and drunk! Can anything be more spontaneous than inspired genius? But even this is not all. The poor old rickety Plot reeks with false purpose piled high upon its own debris. Perverted motive is the rule, not the exception.

Structurally speaking, "Two Women" is incomparably the poorest play of the season. We have not analysed it on the basis of Play Construction. It defies such dissection!

D O N .

An Ambitious Theme Mismanaged.

Rudolph Beiser's Play evidently reached production on the strength of one big moment in the last Act. There is no continuous Interest nor conflict. But it would be practically impossible to thread two Plays on one conflict and that "Don" is virtually two distinct Plays may be seen by the following Problems:

Problem #1.

Conditions: A girl loves a fanatic who elopes with a married woman.

Cause: His purpose is shown to be innocent.

Conclusion: The girl and the fanatic are reconciled.

Problem #2.

Conditions: A fanatic rescues the abused wife of a preacher.

Cause: The preacher bows to the fanatic's divine purpose.

Conclusion: The preacher and wife are reconciled.

These Problems outline the double Plot that baffled Mr. Besier. The best Dramatist on earth could not fuse them into a single Play save as the author has attempted; TELLING one Plot and Dramatizing the other. The result in the present instance is, that neither Plot is wholly TOLD nor wholly enacted. Each has a turn at Dramatization and recitation in spots.

The fundamental character weakness of the Play is that of the hero. He is a fanatic whose conduct is beyond the range of accepted human beliefs. When a character is actuated by a motive that the average auditor rejects, because of its absurd contrast to normal behavior, the thing becomes obviously a concoction of the author.

Next to the structural defect of Conflict, above cited, comes the false suspense all through Act I and half of II, regarding the hero's elopement with a married woman. He has not eloped and a few grains of common sense would compel him to arrest his sweetheart's solicitude. A mere word would dissolve this suspicion at any time. But again the author suppresses the truth for theatric effect. By so doing he wrecks all real sympathy for his hero. For no one wants to see a charming girl marry this driveling idiot.

The denouement of the second Play is never accomplished. The husband merely receives a convenient "flash of truth" which transmogrifies his savage spirit. But this "flash" must be Dramatized! The audience can't look into this fellow's heart by any X-ray process. And no amount of testimony from the accused is convincing. If we are to believe this wife-beating brute will reform there must be some demonstration of his change of soul! The author leaps the gap in Plot by an inference that the fanatic's divine power has worked the miracle. But this is not Drama. It does not "get across!" The Play ideas are both possible, the second Problem has big possibilities. But the treatment is highly undramatic.

T H E F T.

Jack London's Latest Attempt.

A man of Mr. London's popularity as a writer of weird stories has little difficulty in finding a publisher for his attempted plays. He has been attempting and publishing for some years! A man of soundest judgment may be seduced

by the burning desire to write what he thinks Drama. History offers numerous examples. At the present moment, however, we know of no prominent author who can surpass Jack London for misconception of the Science of Play Construction. He caps the climax on all counts! Theme, Plot, Logic, Unity, Sequence, Suspense, Scene and Dialog! All the Principles are as cheerfully violated as though the author had set out with the malicious intention of abusing rather than using them. The book is published by The MacMillan Company at \$1.25.

“Theft” is a tale of wantonness. It involves material for several very bad plays but constructs no semblance of any ONE. In order to reach a Conclusion where sympathy is hopelessly shattered for both hero and heroine the writer demoralizes a statesman of high ideals and corrupts a magnificent woman. And for what? All for the sake of dragging them through situations that are supposedly Dramatic. In the end the author endeavors to round up this budget of idle talk, political economy, voluptuous suggestiveness, bribery, graft, corruption, infidelity and theft, by the spontaneous announcement that this married woman’s love restores the statesman’s lost soul and that in renouncing her husband and child she is promoting the great cause of humanity!

As for Plot, it would be difficult to trace any intended one. The whole book is a confusion of episode, atmosphere and prattle. One of the principle essentials of Plot takes place in a distant city and a report of this feature is telegraphed to the Scene of action. Of course such essentials must be visualized before the eyes of the auditors.

There are some intense moments of isolated Suspense like the Scene where a father orders his daughter stripped to the skin in a room full of people of both sexes with nothing but a screen to shield her. The author demands that she be searched for the “missing papers.” There is no Plot necessity of this outrage, for if the father could trust the housekeeper to search her behind a screen he could certainly permit them to retire to an adjoining room, even if he had to accompany them. There is no disputing the thetic sensuality of this situation. But even if properly employed, so far as technic is concerned, it would still reflect the author’s depraved imagination on account of the obviousness of his insistence upon disrobing this dignified creature under such suggestive circumstances.

Here we have another proof of the dire necessity for technical study. The mightiest genius the world can produce would go just as far wrong as our friend London if he undertook to write Drama without knowledge of the structural work that precedes this covering of words. The more fertile the imagination the more absurd will be the result where creative faculty is not guided by Dramatic Law!

THE SILVER BOX.

Galsworthy's Nearest Approach to Drama.

It is a long leap from fiction to Drama and Mr. Galsworthy is making average progress. His greatest weakness, perhaps, is to let purpose predominate, that is HIS purpose. He has acquired this habit writing novels.

The same skill that constructs a Dramatic Scene can build a Play if adequate knowledge of specifications guides the larger operation. But obviously a man must know what a Play is before he can design one and to recognize that it is not a mere essay exploiting the author's views of a chosen Theme is one of the first requisites. This excess of Theme makes a Play preachy. It is Theme for Theme sake. In other words the characters stop talking for their own account and spout the doctrines of the author.

This fiction writing proclivity dictates the two unnecessary shifts of curtain in Act I and the one in Act II of what is otherwise Mr. Galsworthy's best structural specimen. The Dramatist's conscience would not permit this caprice. It is so easy for the amateur to imagine that his peculiar material demands the frequent fall of the curtain. In reality it is the author who needs shifting! With the feeblest effort these three periods of time signified by the three separate scenes of Act I could be compressed into One sustained division of the Conflict setting forth Plot Conditions.

The needless subdivision of Act II creates a second scene that contains nothing of vital purpose or progress to the Play. Out of narrative habit the author's pen rambles over pages of interesting reading that contribute nothing to the advancement of Problem though he keeps within boundaries of theme. What there is of value in this second fragment could be utilized in the third Act where consultations with the attorney would be more fitting. The author seems actually to prefer the abomination of interrupted Acts! There is no surer means of diluting the Dramatic illusion.

But the Play is not without its points of merit. In the third Act, Theme is skillfully dramatized. The author's purpose is so deftly imbedded in the suspense of the proceeding that theme is wedded to Suspense and we are led to hope—hope—hope—for the very thing that is destined not to happen. This very failure and disappointment drives home the hopelessness of a square deal where wealth opposes poverty before the majesty of the Law. It is another phase of the Theme attempted in "Justice" by the same writer, but "The Silver Box" is far better treatment. The play is published by G. P. Putnam's Sons along with two others, "Joy" and "Strife," at \$1.35. All three are excellent studies in easy dialog but alive with examples of over doctrined Drama.

F R I T Z C H E N .

Sudermann Is Not Learning.

Although Sudermann is frequently grouped with the world's great Dramatists, the searchlight of Science does not show that he is technically more than a loquacious amateur. "Fritzchen" is not a Play in the true sense of the word. It is a narrated report of a drama which takes place elsewhere. In the entire skit no two Plot characters come together to ignite that vital Dramatic spark called Conflict. The nearest approach to legitimate Scene purpose is the meeting of father and son. (Scene 8 in the printed edition). But the father is no Principal in the actual Plot. He is concerned in his son but not involved in the boy's affair. In a well built Play every principal in the cast is INVOLVED in the Scene he enacts. No one is observing this fundamental more accurately than the American author. Sundermann would do well to study our Drama. He is forty miles behind the procession!

Let us take up the thread of the story of "Fritzchen" and see just what fragments get across the footlights. The first event is the disappointment of a young girl at the absence of mail. Who is she? We cannot tell. She chats with the servant as though she might be one of his class and he apparently knows her secret despair but won't tell us! We are given no glimmer of the relation between the girl and the party from whom she expects this epistle. The author evidently intends us to jump at the conclusion she is in love with him—for are not all plays teeming of the tender passion?

Her uncle enters and we have every reason to believe from the conversation that they are expecting "Stephen." Perhaps "Stephen" is her lover? No, he is only the "hired man." Uncle goes on about the young rascal who has not written, still withholding his identity. We have learned that the girl is related to this old gentleman. We now learn that she also has an aunt, his wife. But still no hint of the relation "the young rascal" bears the three. Poor aunt has a weakened heart! Uncle has forged telegrams and all sorts of things to keep her from knowing "the young rascal hasn't written."

We now learn that the boy's name is Fritz and that uncle is "wise" to a clandestine correspondence between him and the niece. We are now presented with more incoherent news, entirely out of Sequence and TALKED by parties of the third part. "Little Frohn" (We have no idea who he is) has written to the girl telling of Fritz's capers with a married lady. From a line that is dropped we might now conjecture that the girl loves Fritz, but it is not the author's intention that we should fully grasp the thought; he avoids direct evidence of the fact.

The girl blushes once, and the uncle tells her no one has noticed her concealed jealousy—and we might add: "Not even the audience!"

We are now confronted by the momentous problem of the "browns or the whites." Uncle cannot decide which team to drive to town with! But he finally departs and Lieutenant von Hallerfort mysteriously appears. Why all this secrecy? We do not know. Sequence is missing—we get effect before cause. Perhaps this young man is a rival lover? No. He merely announces the startling news that Fritz is coming and requests that she "reckon by her watch a half hour from the moment when he comes in here, and then" send a message &c. A little more of the mystery of the Lieutenant's presence and he is off. We laid some store by this mystery but alas, he doesn't even snatch a kiss! And now the aunt conjectures. She has psychically absorbed the "married lady" referred to in "Little Frohn's" letter. This lady has a rude husband! What can an audience make of this? It is further effect preceding cause! Could any amateur obscure his Plot more securely?

The aunt relates a vision she has seen. Poetic experts would label this a master stroke! It bears such potent contrast to something that is to come. We know that something is coming from the prophetic nature of this vision! If we have guessed that it is her son that she talks about it is no fault of Sudermann's. The fact is not established in the text and the girl's presence in the home of the man she apparently loves is unexplained. This may be foreign standpoint. It is foreign to Dramatic fact.

What Sudermann labels as his seventh structural scene accomplishes nothing save Fritz's absent mindedness about some vague something. So long as we do not know what it is there is no possibility of Dramatic Conflict. We haven't the ingredients that make for Suspense. The best that can be accomplished by such procedure is utter dismay. The six Scenes that have preceded are fully as vapid so far as any Plot essence is concerned. They all lead to nothing. Nothing really happens. At the end of the seventh Scene we have no tangible intimation of the premises of a Play and in the eighth Scene we find that no Drama is scheduled. Like the fickle fable writer the author springs a brand new theoretic situation, which might have been Dramatic had the premises been erected to sustain such a climax. There is a vibration resembling Interest in the girl's doom to disappointment when we HEAR that Fritz is disgraced and his threatened duel doubtless awakens extraneous emotion in the breast of the German where this false code of honor prevails.

Of course we must discount liberally for translation. The Dramatic quality of this English is very bad. (Published by

Charles Scribner's Sons, \$1.25). But translation cannot materially effect technic. No master craftsman could put out a piece like "Fritchen" under disguise of Drama. The inevitable conclusion must be that Sudermann is in the childhood of his Art. He has a splendid eye for the big moment, but if he allows the magnitude of this event to swallow up the Conditions and Cause of his creation, there is little chance of his ever doing a real Play. Even Maeterlinck would not tolerate this utter disregard of Drama. But both men have years of study between them and the perfection of Play Construction!

It is the duty of "The DRAMATIST" to point out these diseased Dramatic tissues lest the beginner be deceived into taking the work of a supposed master as a working model. There are many American writers far more worthy of emulation and there are hundreds of unproduced amateurs who would hesitate to palm off such lame stuff for Drama!

T H E N I G G E R.

Better Than "Salvation Nell."

When Edward Sheldon writes a play as uniformly good as the last 47 pages of "The Nigger"** he will put out his masterpiece. He will never surpass the last Scenes in this play for he here achieves the highest purpose of the Dramatist conforming strictly to Theme and motivating every character utilized—every syllable said. There is as wide a chasm between "The Nigger" and "Salvation Nell" as between "Chinatown Charlie" and "Madam X."

But why is this praise not applicable to the entire play? Do you think it because the Dramatist was inspired at this particular epoch? Yes! Inspired, not so much by the muse, as by the fact that he had accidentally stumbled upon the legitimate path of Plot. We can vouch that the straight road was not intentional for the major portion of the play is hopelessly muddled by side paths and windings of disunity. In other words, Mr. Sheldon has built better than he knew because unconsciously he conformed to the immutable Law of Drama. His talents were centered on one purpose in these latter Scenes. In many of the other situations the same genius is wasted on dramatic effect for effect sake without regard for Problem or Plot.

This last inference applies to the bulk of Acts I and II. Act I is consumed with a horrible negro lynching scene; the rapist fresh from assault paraded before our very eyes. Of course it may be contended that atmosphere is afforded, that Theme is in keeping and that contrast is sharpened for the

*The MacMillan Co., New York Price \$1.25.

taint of this fiend's blood that courses through veins of "Morrow." But all such argument is futile. No jot of Theme, no breath of atmosphere is introduced in a real play unless it serves the joint purpose of advancing Conflict in accord with Problem! And if legitimately used this lynching incident must be made to materially advance the Plot or remain spurious episode. The one redeeming feature of the act is Philip's love scene with Georgie (Pages 47 to 57). Georgie's trip abroad is a foreign device to rouse sleeping sentiments. This should be accomplished by means of material within the Scene. But what we mean by redeeming quality is the fact that this love Scene is a legitimate factor in Plot and Problem. It is required that these two young people love. The author has established this fact by means of a Scene—not TELLING us through the other characters.

Noyes' wooing is no part of the Conflict and is a false step at the start. To make him a suitor violates the probability of the same man holding the nomination of Governor in his hand for "Phil." The main Conflict is one of race, not love, and it is false pretense to mislead an audience into expecting a Plot of rival lovers. Here is a good illustration of the necessity for concentration on ONE STORY for One Play! The greedy amateur summons every available detachment of his Theme and ruthlessly pursues disintegration to the bitter end. The DRAMATIST bends the same effort toward rejecting every possible atom of disunity. He knows that his pungency of purpose lies in absolute concentration of energy. This rule works both ways. It stimulates the author's genius to the highest pitch and by confining the attention of the audience to ONE isolated tale affords the highest essence of illusion. Moral: Let variety remain the province of the vaudeville!

We are gradually learning that it is not necessary to parade all the ingredients of a Play before the audience prior to presenting them in concrete form of Scene. Note the vague hints dropped in Act I concerning "Phil's" doubtful parentage. These are premature. They are designed to create Suspense but result in nothing short of dismay. The audience is merely given a sufficient fragment of precedent conditions to set them thinking distracted thoughts that will tend to vitiate valid Plot elements so far as their subconscious reception of same is concerned. And why duplicate? The full facts of "Phil's" illicit antecedents are brought out in "Jinny's confession (See Page 164) by truly dramatic means. This is one of the most telling Scenes in the play, for the author sets up a vital problem for himself and solves it scientifically. It is one of the essentials of Plot and comes out in the nature of unfolding of

Play but is seriously diluted by reason of repetition. The blundering attempts to TALK these same facts into the audience in Act I are out of Sequence. We see nothing to come of it then, for cart is hitched before the horse.

By reducing the Play to rock bottom Problem we can best measure merits and discrepancies.

Problem.

Conditions: A man with negro blood is elected Governor.

Cause: His opponent threatens exposure of this taint.

Conclusion: The Governor submits rather than relinquish principle.

You may find it difficult to so forget the workings of Plot as to analyse down to its framework but this Problem is the first scaffolding of "The Nigger." As we proceed to erect the bolder outlines we add that this governor is a Southerner with all the pride that type implies—that he is ignorant of his negro blood—and that along with predominant Southern principle he must renounce his love for a white girl—that his opponent is a distiller and that the bill before the governor is to prohibit the sale of liquor. One by one these counter Causes add to the cohesiveness of plot in development, but it is only such factors as promote the Problem that legitimately belong in the Play. This lets the biplot of the distiller's love for the white girl out. It does not call for the negro lynching. It disqualifies the necessity of a race riot in II for Plot does not take hold in Act II till some 30 odd pages have elapsed. The riot is doubtless intended for atmospheric value but it is illicit for the reason that the Play halts while this chaff is being played and no Plot progress is accomplished. Real Plot begins at page 135.

As shown in Problem and demanded by Theme the real conflict concerns race prejudice. Without the ability to SEE and adhere to this three clause basis of a Conflict it is very difficult for an author to select such essentials as require representation by means of Scene building and relegate to incidental mention such items as the audience will accept as DRAMATIC FACT upon merest allusion.

But Mr. Sheldon has made more than his share of progress since "Salvation Nell." In the few years intervening he has gone ten years to the good. The thing he still lacks is the Artist's Eye with which to SEE his picture—to form a finished concept in the mind before transmitting it to Dialog. May the next few years be as kind to him! We need such Dramatists!

C A N D I D A .

A Personally Conducted Plot.

In Brentano's published version of this play (\$1.25) there are two fundamental flaws. The first is the absence of coherent Conflict, the second is the weak and sniveling character of the poetic 19-year-old boy whose irresponsibility makes him an implausible contestant for Candida's love against the robust, resolute husband of forty. There is slight disunity in the irrelevance of the curate, the typist and the father-in-law, but the story rests upon one thread. An attempt at Problem will demonstrate.

P R O B L E M .

Conditions: A poet professes a superior love for a parson's wife.

Cause: The parson permits her to make a choice.

Conclusion: The wife continues to love her own husband.

The Conflict lacks reality on several counts. The husband never really considers the boy as a formidable adversary after the isolated instance of a combat at the end of Act I. Here the Play gives promise of real battle,—but much of Act II is given over to the poet's aimless titter with the typist on the topic of love—a commodity. The Conflict is not resumed after that save in an author's personally-conducted tour of mental superficialities. The effort to stimulate the husband's anxiety is unfounded. The wife is not shown to be in love with the boy.

To make this love for a youth convincing in a woman of thirty-five her attachment must be drawn with indelible clarity. In the Dramatic sense of the word there is no issue. Instead of that definite clash of wills that characterizes good Drama, there is a weak, wishy-washy semblance of contention which needlessly degrades the wife and contradicts the husband's resolute personality. The boy is a mere shadow of the infant genius he is designed to portray. His type is one so remote from general human experience as to be of little interest to the crowd.

From this may be drawn a valuable lesson. Avoid the extreme and employ the normal. The familiar type affords a far greater opportunity of subtle character analysis. Here, as in Plot, it is the uncommon treatment of the common, rather than of the complex that spells achievement.

It is the purpose of this journal to warn the aspirant against such spineless specimens of Play Construction. A student might pursue this style of technic for a thousand years

and never discern the secret paths to Playwriting. It is an easy matter to confuse Mr. Shaw's pungent brand of Philosophy with the subtleness of Dramatic Conflict, but they are as distantly related as any other species of prepared preaching. Confine your psychological speculation to the motives which rule the conduct of your character. Do not attempt to exploit your Theme beyond the boundary circumscribed by your Plot.

IF you are unable to obtain competent criticism on your own manuscripts, forward them to the Playreading Department.

The Dramatist
Easton, Pa.

The DRAMATIST

LUTHER B. ANTHONY, Editor

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QUARTERLY

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JULY

Reading of Plays

The Competent playreader is as scarce an article as a wholly commendable play. Why? Because it is necessary for the manuscript judge to stop up the channels of conscious thought in reading real drama and measure dramatic merit by the impressions recorded on his subconscious imagination. In other words he must forget self and **FEEL** trait effects through the primitive instincts of the race to which he belongs.

It is a strange statement to make that the spectator's thinking mind is not involved in seeing an ideal play. If it is brought into operation the play is at fault. The playwright is concerned, therefore, with the problem of putting the mind to sleep and entertaining his audience with a hypnotic dream.

It is only by rare remnants of complete dramatization that this theory can be demonstrated. For play-building is only in its babyhood. The achievements thus far obtained are random results of a hit-and-miss method. What the future holds for dramatic composition is only visible to the imagination of the theorist who can idealize years before the world may realize.

But it is not far distant when plays may be built with illusion so infinite that no susceptible theatre-goer will rouse from the enchanted dream of subconsciousness during the entire period of performance!

Is this a wild prognostication?

The Dramatist backs it up with every hope and assurance of realization. The application of science to this greatest of arts will send it ahead triumphantly. When authors learn that certain effects are the inevitable result of fixed causes and that not a solitary atom of dramatic interest is generated without the operation of LAW, the art will suddenly rise and claim its own kingdom. The great possibilities of drama are but dimly shadowed in the efforts of today.

EXCUSE ME.

An Actor-Made Play.

The playwrights of antiquity suggested an idea for the players and the Play proceeded to build itself out of their spontaneous impressions. That this has been the case with one of the best farces of the season cannot be doubted by those who saw the trial performance of "Excuse Me," and now behold the endless chain of amiable antics performed by the capable cast of comedians at the Gaiety Theatre, New York City.

This remark is not made to minimize the excellence and originality in the author's conception of his farce. The difficulties of presenting three whole acts of a Play on board a train is easily apparent to the naked eye. Mr. Hughes has accomplished the feat and sustained a momentary interest of rare uniformity with admirable invention.

This Play is an excellent example of the half illusion species. The audience never for a moment becomes a willing party to the Plot. There is ever that implied agreement on the part of the auditor that he witnesses the fun of the performance of his own knowledge and consent. We laugh at the antics of the actors never forgetting that they are clever mimics. Their feigned emotions do not become ours. Our souls do not live through the vicissitudes of the characters represented as in a real Play such as "Baby Mine."

These individual stunts are of a high order of amusement in themselves and do conform to the law of UNITY of place in so far as they transpire in one Pullman train with considerable sense of Sequence. There is little else that connects the scraps of episode which keep the audience in continual uproar with fewer lapses and leaks than most any farce of the season. It lacks the sustained purpose of "Baby Mine" but excels "Mrs. Bumstead-Leigh" by reason of greater fidelity to life in its supposed and comic aspects.

But how may we accomplish this closer purpose? How may we knit this variegated group of stunts into a whole fabric? By adhering to the dictates of Plot! The simplest statement of the possible Plot of the farce follows:—

A couple is carried off on an overland train before their wedding ceremony can be performed. Their sentimental tribulations cause another couple to secure a parson and a double wedding ensues.

This is the central idea of the farce and it is only as all other factors contribute to it that the main plot can be benefited. Every other issue should be joined to this dominant Conflict and be made to promote its progress as definitely as possible. The divorce couple enroute for Reno might easily

advance the main story by the introduction of incident showing conclusively that their reconciliation is inspired by the sentimental devotion of the honeymoon couple. And here is the test of validity for any given episode. Does it contribute to the progress of the main Conflict? If it does not, it may be made to. The art of playwriting is this process of blending—of eliminating the extraneous just as truly as the art of the sculptor is the hewing away all foreign hunks of stone. Stroke by stroke the mass of material is formed by carving out the shadows that define the light.

“Excuse Me” is a decided improvement over “Two Women” by the same author. We rejoice in the manifest achievement. But Mr. Rupert Hughes must obtain the art of fusing parts into a whole before he will ever do good Drama.

M R S . B U M S T E A D - L E I G H .

A Play With One Fat Part.

Mrs. Bumstead-Leigh is a good illustration of providing an entertaining part for a very clever actress without building a Play about it. Mrs. Fiske’s adroit personation contributes more drama to the piece than anything the author has furnished. But the opportunities are all there for a veritable Sheridan comedy. The following syllogism suggests what the Play might have been if the fundamentals of Play Construction had been employed.

1. A woman counterfeits aristocracy to match off her sister to advantage.
2. Their humble parentage is detected.
3. The match is sanctioned to avert publicity.

In the original Play a conclusion or third clause is reached that does not grow out of the first two premises. This, of course, prevents a logical form of reasoning. In the above hypothetical exercise note that the last clause follows as an inevitable result of the two preceding premises. In all real Plays the Conclusion MUST be a rational deduction from the first and second premises. The Conclusion of “Mrs. Bumstead-Leigh” is reached by another route entirely. The match is finally sanctioned by the aristocrats in lieu of a threat to dig up the wild oats sewn by the son. In other words the denouement is reached by reviving history that is in no way related to the Plot—a trumped-up incident that does not emanate from the Play proper. It belongs in a separate Conflict.

“Oh, but they laugh at it!” And this remark qualifies the piece as a good entertainment but not as a Play. We are continually under the necessity of explaining that the province of

"The DRAMATIST" is to define Drama, not to condemn everything that fails to conform to this definition. "Mrs. Bumstead-Leigh" is a successful Vaudeville entertainment put up in Play form without the requisite coalescence of the different stunts.

The tomb-stone oration is a bold example of this fact. A clown could undoubtedly step into the Play and fetch just as many laughs as the next one. If the gentleman from Indiana does not perform a service to the Plot in reeling off his clever recitation of grave yard comedy he belongs in a variety bill not a Play. If this tomb-stone oratory is to be utilized in a Play it should be made to promote some particular feature of Plot. Something should depend upon his persuading the principals of the cast as to the advisability of accepting his peculiar brand of cemetery cenotaph, then this Fourth of July oration would become dramatized. As the matter stands it is merely a funny speech familiar to musical comedy or specialty shows. It is as isolated in its present setting as "Casey at the Bat."

Even a farce of the broadest type should blend its ingredients into one completed whole. The tendency to pass upon extraneous items of interest may devitalize the dramatist's technic. Observe Unity to the last letter! When the temptation to dodge the issue arises, say to your subjective self: "I am simply compromising with my Art! The failure to fuse the thing is with me and not with the implasticity of my materials!"

THE WORLD AND HIS WIFE.*

An Off-Stage Melodrama.

Problem.

1. Gossips attack an innocent wife.
2. Their incessant suggestion bears fruit.
3. She weds the maligned admirer.

At the request of one of our subscribers we dissect this success of a few years back. The subscriber deems it a masterpiece and challenges our probe. The ruling idea of the Drama and not its superior craftsmanship has evidently captivated our young friend. The entire structure rests upon a false Spanish code, no longer alive even in Spain, and this artificial intrigue of gossip, slander and duello transpires OFF STAGE for the most part. The generating causes are infirm in humorous instances and the end is invalid since no Conclusion is

*Mitchell Kennerly, New York. Price \$1.

reached that clears the one victim of the Plot—the husband. Even the husband's brother still thinks the wife and lover guilty. Their innocence should be absolutely established. Some effective incident would best set forth this essential.

The two chief defects of the drama are lack of dramatization and lack of motive. Most of the Plot events take place off-stage and are not by any dramatic means visualized before the audience. If the duels were to be withheld as a matter of taste, there are a hundred ways in which they might still become visual factors in the Play without resorting to the lame method of TELLING the audience about them. And too frequently these essentials of Plot are TALKED into the audience by supernumerary characters such as the son of the husband's brother who has no earthly connection with the Play. The author merely elects him to convey his report of what has happened elsewhere, from time to time. Study the Play carefully and you will find several such tattlers. In a real Play all the valid incidents should be enacted or represented visually in some dramatic manner. In other words they should be dramatized, not narrated.

The unmotived features referred to are best illustrated by Severo, the husband's brother, his wife and son. The British captain is also of this brand. Severo virtually assumes command of affairs in his brother's household for no substantial reasons of his own. He is not a creature from life, he exists only in the old school melodrama long since deceased. The audience knows no such meddling specimens outside the realm of yellow-back fiction.

The brother who readily credits the first breath of scandal that will injure his own kin, with no ulterior motive, is a being we cannot reconcile. He is acting against his own best interests without a cause. If a cause were supplied it would divide the Unity of the Play. Severo is therefore miscast. He has no place in the Plot for he is not a principal. The person who should play his part at the opening of the Play is the official who has the authority to reject Julian on account of the gossip concerning his wife and her supposed lover.

But Severo's false conduct does not end here. He and his wife dominate the principals in their own home! The author even strikes Julian with a delirium so that he may conveniently believe the brother's purposeless intrigue against the wife. But as we said before, the scandal is never cleared up. The last curtain drops without a solution of the main Plot.

But how to rectify these infirmities and build with the same splendid idea a Play of merit—this is the duty of the constructive critic, to point out the way.

The idea of dramatic excellence in this Play is the thought that scandal mongers by their incessant suggestion of illicit

relations between pure and innocent beings may eventually consummate their union. Very little of the present structure could be utilized in a correctly built Play upon this theme. The whole thing must be rearranged. The scandal-monger must be one who is IN THE PLAY and motived by real and rational purpose. The idea might be developed into a most powerful regenerative drama wherein miserable machinations result in the actual creation of lofty love interest. This is the note that struck a resonant chord in our subscriber's soul. The thought is a big one and contains possibilities of a magnificent Play. Evolving good out of evil is by far the highest province of the Playwright!

DEAR OLD BILLY.

An Imported Farce.

Some comparative idea of how the British receive our bad Plays may be gained by attending W. H. Risque's farce acted in this country by Mr. William Hawtrey and a company of English players.

There are few American amateurs who could write further away from the definition of Play if paid for it. It is truly an Englishman's estimate of what an American audience will "fall for" and by this we mean the traditional "English" brand of humor.

From a Yankee standpoint the farce is not fit for a preparatory school production and our inability to interpret the imported make of farcial acting renders the thing doubly sad in its descent from the ridiculous to the insipid.

Is it any wonder the British managers are looking to us for theatrical attractions. The tide is gradually turning and the day is not far distant when export trade will exceed our imports.

FACING DEATH

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT

By August Strindberg

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Characters:

Monsieur Durand, boarding house keeper, previously a railway employee.

Adele, his daughter, 27 years.

Annette, his daughter, 24 years.

Therese, his daughter, 18 years.

Antonio, lieutenant of the Italian Cavalry.

Pierre, a servant.

In French Switzerland during the Eighties.

(A dining room with a long table. Through the open door, center, can be seen the tops of the cypresses in the cemetery, Lac Lemon, the Savoyer-Alps and the French resort, Evian. To the left a door leads to the kitchen. To the right a door to the rooms).

Scene I.

DURAND (With a fieldglass, looking over the lake).

ADELE (Enters from the kitchen; wears apron and has sleeves turned up, carries a tray with the coffee service).—Have you not fetched the coffee-bread yet, father?

DURAND.—No, I sent Pierre. My breath is failing lately, so I cannot climb the steep hill.

ADELE.—Pierre again! That will cost three sous! Where DURAND.—Yes, so you did, and you have at least shown are they to come from, when there has been but one traveler at our house these two months?

DURAND.—That is very true, but I feel that Annette ought to get the bread!

ADELE.—Then we would lose our standing entirely! You have done nothing but throw discredit on us!

DURAND.—Even you, Adele?

ADELE.—Even I am tired, though I kept up the longest! human feeling while Therese and Annette have tormented me. You and I have managed the house since mother died. You have had to sit in the kitchen like Cinderella and I have had to do the serving, sweeping, brushing, making fires, run errands. You are tired; what ought I to be, then?

ADELE.—But you have no right to be tired, while you have three children unprovided for, whose fortune you have squandered.

DURAND (Listening).—Does that not sound like bells and drums from Cully? If a fire breaks out we are lost, because the storm will soon be blowing. The lake shows it.

ADELE.—Have you paid our insurance?

DURAND.—Certainly, or I could not have obtained the last mortgage.

ADELE.—How much is still clear?

DURAND.—One fifth of the insurance value. But you know how property values have fallen since the railway went Eastward past our gates.

ADELE.—The more welcome then!

DURAND (Harshly).—Adele! (Pause) Please put out the kitchen fire!

ADELE.—Impossible, until the coffee-bread arrives!

DURAND.—Well then, here it is!

Scene II.

(As before, Pierre enters, carrying a basket).

ADELE (Looking into the basket).—No bread! Only a bill! Two! Three!

PIERRE.—Yes, the baker says you can have no more bread until he is paid.—And when I passed the butcher and grocer they handed me their bills (Exit).

ADELE.—Ah! God in Heaven! This is our finish!—But, what is this? (Opens a package).

DURAND.—It is candles I have bought for the mass over my beloved Rene! You know it is the anniversary of his death to-day.

ADELE.—Such things you can afford to buy!

DURAND.—With my tips, yes. Do you not consider it humiliating enough that I am obliged to reach forth my hand when travelers move.—Do you envy me the only contentment I know, to revel in my sorrow once a year? To revive the memory of the most beautiful thing life has brought me?

ADELE.—Ah, if he had only lived to grow up, you probably wouldn't dote on his beauty!

DURAND.—Perhaps your taunt carries truth with it—however, as I remember him, he was not like the rest of you!

ADELE.—Will you be so kind as to receive M. Antonio yourself, when he comes to drink his coffee, without bread!—Oh, if mother was only alive! She had the faculty of managing where you stand crestfallen!

DURAND.—Your mother had her good points!

ADELE.—Although you found only bad ones!

DURAND.—M. Antonio is coming!—Go away, I will speak to him.

ADELE.—It would be far better if you went out and borrowed money, so the disgrace might be avoided.

DURAND.—I cannot borrow a sou! I have borrowed for ten years! Let it collapse at once, everything, everything, if the end only comes!

ADELE.—The end for you, yes! But you never think of us!

DURAND.—No, I have never thought of you! Never!

ADELE.—Do you hint at a fee for bringing us up again?

DURAND.—I only answered an unjust charge! Go now, and I will meet the storm as usual!

ADELE.—As usual! Eh? (Exits).

Scene III.

(M. Durand. M. Antonio.)

ANTONIO.—(Enters C.)—Good morning, M. Durand.

DURAND.—You have been taking a walk, Lieutenant?

ANTONIO.—Yes, I have been down towards Cully and seen a chimney fire put out!—And now the coffee will taste fine!

DURAND.—I do not need to tell you how hard it is for me to have to say that my house is unable any longer to continue in business.

ANTONIO.—How so?

DURAND.—To speak plainly, we are bankrupt!

ANTONIO.—But, my good sir, is there no way to help you out of this, as I hope, temporary difficulty?

DURAND.—No, there is no possibility! The house has been toppling on the brink of ruin for years. I would rather see it collapse at once than worry day and night about what eventually must happen!

ANTONIO.—Still I believe you take the thing too seriously.

DURAND.—What reason have you to doubt my opinion?

ANTONIO.—Let me help you.

DURAND.—I don't want any help! Poverty must come to teach my children to lead different lives. With the exception of Adele who really attends to the kitchen, what are they doing? Playing and singing, promenading and flirting; and as long as there is a crust in the house, they are not going to learn anything useful!

ANTONIO.—Even if it be so, meanwhile we must have food in the house. Allow me to stay another month and I will pay my board in advance.

DURAND.—No, I thank you. We must now go to the end of the road even if we drive straight into the lake. I will not continue this business which does not give bread; only humiliation. Picture to yourself our condition of last Spring when the house had been empty for three months. At last an American family came and saved us. The morning after their arrival I caught the son on the stairs holding my daughter—it was Therese—in his arms, trying to kiss her. What would you have done in my place?

ANTONIO (Embarrassed)—I don't know—

DURAND.—I know what as a father I should have done,—but as a father, I did not do it! Next time I know what to do!

ANTONIO.—It strikes me that just for such reasons you ought to weigh carefully what you do and not leave the future of your daughters to chance—

DURAND.—M. Antonio—you are a young man to whom I, for some inexplicable reason, have taken a fancy. Whether you appreciate this or not, I ask you one favor: have no suspicions whatsoever about myself or my actions.

ANTONIO.—M. Durand, I promise, if you only answer me one question: Are you born a Switzer, or no?

DURAND.—I am a citizen of Switzerland!

ANTONIO.—I know that, but I ask if you are born in Switzerland?

DURAND (Hesitatingly)—Yes!

ANTONIO.—I only asked, because—it interests me. However,—as I must believe you, that the house is to close, I will pay my debt. It is, indeed only ten francs, but I cannot leave without settling it.

DURAND.—I am not sure that you owe me anything, because I do not keep the books, but if you deceive me the fault is yours. Now I am going to get the bread.—Then we will see! (goes).

Scene IV.

(Antonio, then Therese, carries a rat trap. She is in morning gown, her hair loose. Adele enters later).

THERESE.—Oh, here is Antonio! I thought I heard the old man!

ANTONIO.—Yes, he went to buy the coffee-bread,—he said.

THERESE.—Has he not done that! Oh dear, there is really no putting up with him any longer!

ANTONIO.—You are very beautiful, to-day, Therese, but the rat-trap does not become you.

THERESE.—And such a trap! I have set it now for a month without catching a single rat, but the bait is gone every morning.—Have you seen anything of Mimmi?

ANTONIO.—That devilish cat? She is usually seen on all occasions! But to-day I have actually been spared!

THERESE.—You must talk respectfully about the absent and remember that whosoever loves me, must love my cat! (Sets the trap on the table and takes an empty saucer from under it) Adele!—Adele!

ADELE (In the kitchen door).—What is it your highness demands so imperiously?

THERESE.—Some milk for my cat, and cheese for your rats!

ADELE.—Get it yourself!

THERESE.—Is that the manner in which you answer her highness?

ADELE.—It is the manner in which to answer your manner of speech! Besides you should catch it doubly hard for showing yourself before strangers with your hair uncombed.

THERESE.—Strangers! Here are only old acquaintances and—Antonio, go and speak nice to Aunt Adele and she will give you milk for Mimmi.

ANTONIO (Hesitating).

THERESE.—Well, are you going to mind?

ANTONIO (Curtly).—No!

THERESE.—What kind of language is this? Do you wish to taste my riding-whip?

ANTONIO.—Ah! For shame!

THERESE.—What is this? What is this? Do you wish to remind me of my place, my mistake and my weakness.

ANTONIO.—No, I only wish to remember my place, my mistake and my weakness!

ADELE (Taking the saucer).—See here, my friends, what kind of language are you indulging in? Be good now—and I will . . .

THERESE.—(Weeping). You are tired of me Antonio and you intend to abandon me.

ANTONIO.—You mustn't cry, because then you get ugly eyes.

THERESE.—And if they are not as pretty as Annette's—then?—

ANTONIO.—Aha! Is it Annette now? Look here, folly aside, I think the coffee is rather slow in coming—

THERESE—You would, indeed, be a pleasant husband, who cannot wait a moment for your coffee.

ANTONIO.—And what a darling wife you would make who cannot commit a stupidity without picking on your husband.

Scene V.

(As before. Annette enters dressed and combed).

ANNETTE.—I believe you are quarreling so early in the morning.

ANTONIO.—Ah, here is Annette already dressed!

THERESE.—Oh, yes, Annette is wonderful in many ways and she has even the advantage of being older than I.

ANNETTE.—If you do not shut your mouth—

ANTONIO.—Well! Well! Be good now, Therese. (He puts arms around her and kisses her).

Scene VI.

(As before, M. Durand in the door, stops astonished).

DURAND.—What is this?

THERESE.—(Tearing herself loose) What?

DURAND.—Did my eyes deceive me?

THERESE.—What did you see?

DURAND.—I saw that you let the strange gentleman kiss you.

THERESE.—That's a lie!

DURAND.—Have I lost my senses or dare you lie to my face?

THERESE.—Do you talk about lying, you who lie to us and all the world that you are born Swiss, although you are a Frenchman?

DURAND.—Who told you so?

THERESE.—Mother did!

DURAND.—(To Antonio) M. Lieutenant, as our business is settled I ask you to leave this house—at once! Or—

ANTONIO.—Or?

DURAND.—Or choose weapons.

ANTONIO.—I wonder what weapon you would choose, except the hare's weapon.

DURAND.—If I did not prefer the sword, I would take my gun from the last war—

THERESE.—You speak of war, you, who deserted!

DURAND.—Mother has said that too! I cannot strike the dead, but I can strike the living dead! (Lifts his cane and rushes at Antonio, Therese and Annette throw themselves between).

ANNETTE.—Be careful what you do!

THERESE.—You will end on the scaffold.

ANTONIO.—(Moving away) Farewell M. Durand! You have my scorn and my ten Francs!

DURAND.—(Takes a goldpiece from his pocket and throws after Antonio) My curses upon you and your gold! You old scamp!

THERESE and ANNETTE.—(To Antonio) Don't go!
Don't go! Father will kill us!

DURAND.—(Breaks the cane) He who cannot kill, dies!

ANTONIO.—Farewell! Now you lose me, the last rat on
the sinking ship! (Goes).

Scene VII.

(As before, without Antonio).

THERESE.—That is the way you treat our guests! Is it
any wonder the house is crumbling?

DURAND.—Such treatment! Such guests! But tell me,
Therese, my child—(He takes her head between his hands)
My darling child; tell me truly if I saw wrong, or if you told
an untruth?

THERESE.—(Angrily) What then?

DURAND.—You know what I mean! And it is not the
act in itself, which might have been innocent enough—it is the
question if I cannot depend on my senses that is worrying me!

THERESE.—Talk about something else—Talk about
what we are to eat and drink, today!—anyhow, it is a lie that
he kissed me!

DURAND.—It is not a lie! In the name of Heaven, did
I not see plainly what passed!

THERESE.—Prove it!

DURAND.—Prove it! With two witnesses or one police-
man! Annette, my child, will you tell me the truth?

ANNETTE.—I saw nothing!

DURAND.—That was well answered, because one should
not inform against one's sister.—You are very like your moth-
er to-day, Annette!

ANNETTE.—Say nothing evil about mother! Thank
goodness she is spared this day!

Scene VIII.

(As before. Adele Enters with a glass of milk, which she
places on the table).

ADELE.—(to Durand) There is your milk! How about
the bread?

DURAND.—I got no bread, my children, but it will be
gotten, now as ever.

THERESE.—(Snatching the glass from her father) You
shall have nothing, you, who throw away money and let your
children starve.

ADELE.—Did he throw away money, the wretch? He
should have been put in an asylum the time mother declared
he was ripe for it! Look here, there is one more bill handed in
the back door!

DURAND (Looks at the bill, startles, pours out a glass of water, drinks, sits and lights a pipe).

ANNETTE.—But he can afford to smoke!

DURAND (Tired and submissive)—Dear children, this tobacco has cost you no more than the water, because I got it as a present six months ago! Do not agitate yourselves without a cause.

THERESE (Snatching the matches)—Anyhow, you are not going to waste the matches—

DURAND.—If you know, Therese, how many matches I have used up on you, when I had to get up nights and see if you had thrown the cover off; if you know, Annette, how often I have secretly given you water, when you cried for thirst and your mother had the notion that it was bad for children to drink.

THERESE.—That is so long ago, that I don't care to hear about it. Besides, it was only your duty, as you have often said yourself!

DURAND.—It was, but I did my duty! And a little more!

ADELE.—Continue to do so! Or what is to become of us? Three young girls left without care or protection and without anything to live on. Do you know what poverty may drive us to?

DURAND.—I realized that ten years ago, but no one would listen to me, twenty years ago I plainly foresaw that this hour would come, but I have not been able to prevent it. I have been sitting like a brakeman on a madly running train, have realized that it headed for destruction, but have not been able to get to the throttle to stop it.

THERESE.—And now you wish to be thanked because you have landed us in the ditch?

DURAND.—No, my child, I only ask that you be a little less cruel to me. You have cream for the cat but you begrudge your father the milk though he has eaten nothing—for a long time.

THERESE.—Is it you then that has begrudged the kittie her drop of milk?

DURAND.—Yes it is I!

ANNETTE.—And perhaps it is he, too, who has eaten the rat's bait?

DURAND.—It is he!

ADELE.—What a swine!

THERESE (Laughing).—Just think if there had been poison on it!

DURAND.—Ah, if there only had been!

THERESE.—Well, I suppose you wouldn't care, you who so often have threatened to kill yourself!

DURAND.—Why have you not killed yourself? Do you

reproach me thus directly? Well, do you know why I have not done it? So that you wouldn't have to drown yourselves, my dear children!—Say something else nasty now! It is like familiar music of the good old times—

ADELE.—Stop this useless chatter and do something. Do something!

THERESE.—Do you know what the consequence may be if you leave us in this condition?

DURAND.—That you prostitute yourselves, no doubt. I always said so to your mother when she had thrown away the housekeeping money on lottery tickets.

ADELE.—Silence! Not one word about our dear, beloved mother!

DURAND (Humming to himself).—There burns a candle in this house; and when it burns out the goal is won! Won it will be! And then comes the storm with a great noise! Yes! —No!—(It has commenced to rumble and blow outside. He springs up. (To Adele) Put out the kitchen fire! The storm is coming!

ADELE (Looks him in the eye).—The storm is not coming.

DURAND.—Put out the fire! If a fire breaks out from that source we will not get any insurance. Put out the fire, I say! Put it out!

ADELE.—I do not understand you!

DURAND (Takes her hands and looks into her eyes).—But mind me, anyhow, my dear! Do as I say!

ADELE (Goes into the kitchen, leaves the door open).

DURAND (To Therese and Annette).—Go upstairs and close your windows, children, and see to the dampers. But come and kiss me first, I am going on a journey—to get you money!

THERESE.—Can you get money?

DURAND.—I have a life insurance that I intend to realize on.

THERESE.—How much can you get on that?

DURAND.—Six-hundred Francs if I sell it, five-thousand if I die.

THERESE (Troubled).

DURAND.—Speak out my child!—No! We must not be unnecessarily unkind! Tell me, Therese, do you love Antonio and should you be very unhappy if you do not get him?

THERESE.—Oh yes!

DURAND.—Then you must marry him. That is, if he loves you! But never be unkind to him, because then you will be unhappy! Farewell my darling, darling child! (Takes her in his arms and kisses her cheeks).

THERESE.—You must not die, father! You must not!

DURAND.—Can you not grant me peace, at last?

THERESE.—Yes, if you truly wish it! Forgive me, father, for all the times I have been unkind to you.

DURAND.—Trifles, child!

THERESE.—But no one ever was so wicked to you, as I?

DURAND.—I noticed it less, because I loved you most,—why I know not. Well, go now and shut the windows.

THERESE.—There are the matches, father!—and—there is your milk!

DURAND (Smiling).—Oh you child!

THERESE.—Well, what can I do? I have nothing else to give you.

DURAND.—You have given me so much joy when you were little that you owe me nothing. Go now! Give me but one kind look, as of old!

THERESE (Turns and throws herself into his arms).

DURAND.—Well, well, my child, now everything is forgiven. (Therese runs out).

Scene IX.

(M. Durand. Annette, later Adele).

DURAND.—Farewell Annette!

ANNETTE.—Are you going away? I do not comprehend?

DURAND.—I am going away.

ANNETTE.—But you are coming back, father?

DURAND.—No one knows if he lives over the morrow, so at any rate we may say good-bye.

ANNETTE.—Goodby then, father! Happy journey! Do not forget to bring something to us, as you used to? (Goes).

DURAND.—She remembers that, though it is long since I brought anything for my children! Goodby, my Annette! (Humming to himself) For good or evil, little or big, as you sow so must you reap.

ADELE (Enters).

DURAND.—Adele! Now you must listen to me! And understand!—If I speak in hidden terms it is only because I wish to spare your conscience. You mustn't know too much!—Now first ask me; "Have you any life insurance?"—Well!

ADELE (Questioning, uncertain)—Have you any life insurance?"

DURAND.—No, I have had once, but I sold it long ago, because I noticed that some one was anxious for it to fall due.—But I have a fire insurance. Here is the policy; keep it securely!—Now I ask you:—do you know how many candles there are to a pound at 75 centimes?

ADELE.—Six.

DURAND (Pointing to the package).—How many are there?

ADELE.—Only five!

DURAND.—Because the sixth one stands very high up and very near to!—

ADELE.—Lord Jesus!

DURAND (Looks at his watch).—In five minutes or so it will have burnt down!

ADELE.—No!

DURAND.—Yes! Can you see any other light through this darkness? No!—Very well!—So much about business. Now for another matter! That M. Durand passes out of this world as an (Whispers) incendiary matters little, but that he has lived to this day as an honorable man his children must know,—Well then, I was born in France—I did not have to acknowledge it to the first scamp that came!—Shortly before the age of conscription I happened to fall in love with her who became my wife. We came out here and were naturalized in order to get married!—When the last war broke out and it looked as if I might be obliged to carry arms against my country I went out as a Frenchman against the Germans!—So you see, I have never deserted! Your mother has made up that fable!

ADELE.—My mother never lied!

DURAND.—Mercy! Now the corpse is up again and stands between us! I cannot bear witness against the dead, but I swear that I have told the truth. Do you hear! Now, about your mother's estate. The matter stands like this: first she scattered my whole fortune by extravagance and foolish speculation; so that I was obliged to give up my position and set up this boarding house. Afterwards a part of her estate had to be used for your education and that can surely not be called throwing it away.—Consequently, that too, was an untruth—

ADELE.—No! Mother said otherwise on her deathbed—

DURAND.—Then your mother lied on her deathbed, as she had done all her life—and that is the curse that has followed me like a ghost! Oh, how I have been innocently tortured with those lies all these years! I did not wish to plant evil in your young souls by making you doubt the purity of your mother. I was the bearer of her cross. All our married life, I carried her wrongs on my back, took the blame for her folly, till I actually considered myself the guilty one. And she was not slow to pose as guiltless. Then as a martyr, "Blame Me," I used to say when she was in a dilemma, and she blamed! And I took it. But the more she owed me the more she hated me, with the uncontrollable hatred of a creditor. And at last she despised me and lulled herself into the notion that

she had fooled me! At last she taught you, too, to despise me because she needed to be braced up in her weakness! I believe that this evil but weak soul would die with her. But the evil lives and grows like a disease, while the healthy growth stops at a certain point, then retrogrades. Hence, when I wished to correct the habits in this house, you met me with: "Mother,"—"so said mother." And therefore it is right! So, to you I became a weakling when I was kind; a wretch when I was sensitive, a rascal when you had your way and we had gone to ruin!

ADELE.—It is noble indeed to accuse the dead!

DURAND (Speaks very fast and excitedly).—I am not dead yet, but I will be soon! Will you then vindicate me?—No, you needn't! But protect your sisters. Care only for my children. Adele, be a mother to Therese. She is the youngest and the liveliest, hasty for good and evil, thoughtless and weak! Try to have her married soon, if you possibly can!—Now, now I smell burnt straw!

ADELE.—Lord in Heaven help us!

DURAND (Empties the waterglass).—He is doing so!—For Annette you must try to get a position as governess! Then she will get out into the world among good company.—When the insurance is paid you must take care of the money. Do not be stingy but dress your sisters so that they are presentable! Save nothing but the family papers, which are in my desk,—middle drawer. Here is the key.—The Policy you have—(Smoke is seen to break through the ceiling) Soon it is done! In a moment the bell at St. Francois will ring!—Promise me one thing.—Never mention this to your sister! It would only disturb their peace through life. (He sits by the table). One more matter: never say anything evil about your mother! Her picture is also in the desk—I never showed you that, because it was quite enough to have her unseen spirit in the home! My love to Therese, tell her to forgive me! Don't forget that you must give her the best when you buy clothes, you know how she loves those things, and you know what her weakness might lead to!—Tell Annette—(A deep toll is heard. The smoke increases. M. Durand drops his head on his hands on the table).

ADELE.—Fire!—Fire!—Father!—What is the matter with you! You will burn!—

DURAND.—(Lifts his head and pushes away the water glass with a meaning gesture).

ADELE.—You have—taken—poison!

DURAND.—(Nodding assent). Have you the insurance policy?—Tell Therese—and Annette— (His head falls down again. Another toll; noise and voices outside).

Curtain.

FACING DEATH
The Acme of Indefinite Drama.

By far the gravest flaw in Strindberg's sketch is the fact that he has made it impossible for either the reader or the spectator to interpret his meanings with any definite security. We are never just certain of his thought and many are the moments of absolute obscurity. Scenes I and II have very slight purpose. They are not properly dramatized. The characters are obviously set upon the stage to TELL us certain past and present domestic conditions. Scene III repeats much that is attempted in Scene I—the financial stringency of the household—and Antonio, the new character, is of no real service to the main conflict.

Why is the son of the American alluded to? What has his insult to Therese got to do with the Play? If we were already informed of the relation between Antonio and Therese, there might be a slight trickle of dramatic interest but even that would be extraneous and foreign to the real Play which is to develop later. The old man's veiled threat misleads the auditor. It promises a Conflict between Durand and Antonio. But this fizzles out.

Antonio's question about Durand's nationality is purely mechanical. The Plot does not call for it. Antonio has no possible motive for asking it. The only conceivable use, even, is the retaliation that Therese makes, when she gives her father the lie, later on.

In Scene IV we have another incoherent reference to an affair between Antonio and Therese. We never know what this affair has been. We are permitted to guess that he has ruined the girl. But has this any possible connection with the Playlet? If it had, its utter vagueness would destroy the sense as far as dramatic definiteness is concerned. For Drama is definite!

Scene VI is no less inconsequent. The kissing incident, the lie about it and the threatened duel are surely items of another Play. They serve no purpose here. We now see the hollow utility of the reference to Durand's nationality. Therese slaps back at him. Of course the defense of the dead mother is pertinent, but it is not necessary to hatch up the daughter's seduction to bring this to the surface.

Scene VII is merely an extension of the spurious matter in VI. The old man's failing senses do not enter into the Problem of the Play proper. It can hardly be advanced as a motive for the old man's suicide.

The Play might well begin with Scene VIII and all that has gone before contains nothing that could not be woven into this dialog with alacrity. But even this Scene lacks dramatization. There are two Plot ingredients that are carelessly

omitted. The first is the fact that the father has poison in the glass which he is about to take. This would illuminate every reference to death and suicide made by the old man. The second is the fact that he has set a candle in the house where its flame will slowly start a blaze that will sweep the entire premises. This would give a dramatic force to every allusion to life insurance, fire or provision for Durand's helpless daughters.

"There burns a candle in this house," is too miserably indefinite to create the required suspense. The audience must not only know—they must SEE the poison as well as the burning candle! Just think, a moment, how the actual flame creeping along the roof of the building would intensify the interest in all the old man's vague inferences! Think what the added significance would be of the odor of burning straw!

The latter part of Scene VIII becomes highly dramatized because at great expense the Conditions of the Conflict have finally been ground into us. The old man's hidden inferences are very affecting. Scene IX sustains the same uncanny mood until it rambles off onto the story of his life. This obviously belongs at the beginning of a play.

We have purposely omitted a digest of the Play's purpose until the end of our criticism to aid the reader in determining the same for himself. Little idea of central motif can be gleaned from a study of the first seven Scenes. The nucleus of the sketch is as follows:

A father has been a silent martyr to the legacy of lies passed down by his deceased wife. He finally refutes this blasphemy by sacrificing his life to provide for his children.

Or to present it in the form of a syllogism, it is:

Problem:

1. A father has been maligned for extravagance.
2. He sacrifices life to provide for his children.
3. The blasphemy is refuted.

How would we set about to dramatize this story? The truest guide we can offer is as follows: Place the Plot upon the motion picture reel of your imagination. Cast the different views upon the screen in their proper order and merely add such words as are essential to a clear interpretation of the passing picture. Where the photograph fails to convey an adequate meaning, supply a word or two and the Play will build.

By this test you will find a host of Strindberg's words are absolutely void and valueless. The audience craves the chance to drink in the drama with their eyes. Verbal decoration merely dulls the concept when it arrests the imagination of the

spectator by a demand on his conscious thought to interpret the meaning of a chain of idle speeches. Moral: Augment the eye by the ear!

TWO THEATRICAL SEASONS COMPARED

EVENTS IN PRODUCING THEATRES

	1909-10	1910-11
Number of new plays	102	89
Number of new musical comedies	26	37
Number of revived plays	38	67
Number of revived musical comedies	4	5
Shakespearian revivals	13	17
 Totals	 183	 215

CLASSIFICATION OF PLAYS

Serious and sentimental dramas	37	27
Melodramas	26	10
Romantic comedies	10	12
Light comedies	10	19
Tragedies	3	2
Farces	16	19
 Totals	 102	 89

SOURCES OF NEW PLAYS

Original plays	74	65
Adapted from foreign plays	15	14
Dramatized from novels or stories	13	10
 Totals	 102	 89

NATIONALITY OF AUTHORS

By native authors	63	62
By foreign authors	39	27
 Totals	 102	 89

NEW MUSICAL COMEDIES

By native composers	18	26
By foreign composers	8	11
 Totals	 26	 37

In this table we find fewer New Plays for 1911 but a smaller percentage of foreign authors. Light Comedies show the biggest increase, Melodramas the heaviest decline.

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Our Third Year

It is with sincere gratitude that we glance back over our brief career and contemplate the changes wrought in this period. We are not bigoted enough to believe that this journal has been the sole cause of these innovations in dramatic technic but we are flattered by the fact that some of them have been voiced by no other organ in America.

We refer more particularly to our boast that American craftsmen are the keenest in the world, that three-act Plays would come to be the divisional standard and that the audience must invariably be given the key to the Conflict.

Our first claim has been substantiated by a recent contract for the French rights to an American masterpiece made by Sarah Bernhardt. She will play the leading role herself and stage it in her own theatre. The Play is Eugene Walter's "The Easiest Way."

When we started advocating three acts as the normal division of a Play a loud protest greeted this doctrine. Glance over the list of current productions and you will find three acts the rule and four the rare exception. The same is even more true of the unproduced plays to come.

The same exception was taken to our plea that the author must cunningly convey to the audience his impending Conflict. And the best drama in New York today is a confirmation of this theory. "The Woman" extracts every essence of effectiveness out of its dramatic possibilities by frankly confiding the complications and relying solely upon skill in solution for suspense.

And so runs the world. The analyst sees these laws before the adept grasps and employs them as working forms and principles. Imagination idealizes before the world realizes. The laws of drama are fast and immutable. In the infancy of this art it is difficult to perceive them. All have been utilized, but not in the richest arrangement for supreme harmony. How can we gain a glimpse of the perfect, then, save through the eye of the idealist?

When the playwright treats a contemporary theme by an appeal to the fundamental emotions of mankind, employing all the cardinal principles of Play construction, then, and not until then, will we approach the perfect drama.

T H E W O M A N .

Real Dramatic Interest Plus Illusion.

No Play of the new season attains the high plane of theatric effect achieved by Wm. C. DeMille in "The Woman." It has more grip, more power than any production in the metropolis. Point after point is scored by THE AUDIENCE who build the Play which the author has cleverly contrived for their reconstruction. This is the acme of dramaturgic Art: to permit the audience to feel they are divining the Plot.

At the drop of the first curtain we are artfully placed in possession of secret Plot ingredients that urge us on to anticipating the entire Play. The novice would erase this bold stroke for fear of revealing too much. He could not understand the superior craftsmanship of such frankness. But each individual auditor is made to believe he is the only one who knows. This subtle hint of the approaching complicity generates suspense. It does not retard it. This is the Playwright's province. Not to spring sudden surprises from the dark cabinet but to hint his mystery and then bind the auditor's interest by the magic of dramatic disclosure.

The sophisticated critic will quibble over lapses of logic in this model of Play Construction, but let's ask the audience about them. What do they feel? That is the acid test of technology. To this composite crowd ILLUSION has carried credulity. For the mob is many times more credulous than the individual. Mr. DeMille understands this psychic phenomenon. The inwreapt witness of his work ignores the trifling inconsistencies and finds it difficult to shake off the hypnosis wrought by his witchery.

It is a time-worn tradition of dramatic writing that the first act of a Play must be given over to "Exposition" socalled; that the Plot cannot start with the revelation of Play Conditions but must either halt or limp along till the preliminaries "get over." This is one of the most flagrant fallacies of Play Building. It has marred the first half hour of "The Woman" where nothing happens pending a tiresome TALK of "Exposition." When this long sleep is over the Plot wakes up with a start. From that moment on the interest is relentless. The author tells his story through the alembic of dramatic art. His moral is impressed but not preached. The soul receives the sermon, not the ear. We behold the muck-raker besmirched in the splash of his own foul efforts. And this is an eternal truth.

Here is a domestic product that foreign technicians may take off their hats to. It is in the rigid practice of sound technology that the American must excel before he soars off into realms of uninterpretable psychology.

Of course, we know that Belasco is to blame for the subtle stagecraft that gives the supreme finish to this production. To him and to Mr. DeMille the dramatists of this age are indebted for an excellent model to pattern after. "The Dramatist" adds its acknowledgment of gratitude. "The Woman" is an embodiment of nearly every positive playwriting principle we have been preaching!

T H E A R A B .

A Travelogue in Four Views.

Mr. Edgar Selwyn has demonstrated much photographic skill but little dramatic power in his motion picture product of the streets of a Syrian village. It is a travelogue in four reels called acts. There is no central idea to be clothed with Conflict, no Conflict to enlist our sympathies and beget suspense, and the slight tissue of interest that attaches to the plight of a girl besieged by savages in a foreign mission is so highly colored with romantic artifice that no dramatic realism attends her rescue.

The mating of a half reformed Arab with the cultured daughter of an American missionary is so far beyond the founded beliefs of the audience that little valid Play material can come of it. Foreign tongues and oriental politics require too much interpretation in themselves to permit a fictitious tale on top of them. The cleverest Plot might be hopelessly obscured by this futile effort to launch a true love story while introducing strangers and a strange land.

The piece is the usual result of an able actor's effort to create an effective role for himself. It compares with Sothern's "The Light that Lies in a Woman's Eyes." If Mr. Selwyn wants to write a great part for his acting talents he must first cast it in the Conflict that molds character. Dramatic power must dominate the process by which personal portrayal is produced.

S P E E D .

A Qualified Comedy.

From the significant title on through to the very core of its theme, this Comedy is an epoch making pattern for Plays to come. It possesses humor without rough-house methods and moral without unimpersonated preaching. It is essentially the dramatic gem of the early season.

Its story is played and not told.

It is measured for the sole and the shoe fits.

It gratifies the senses only to lay on the lash that smarts.

It is a Play for everyone, not the intellectual few.

It is constructed by a succession of structural Scenes, not sounds.

Its characters are not motived by the mechanical needs of the author.

It is founded on the fundamental law of humanity—parental love.

It unfolds before our eyes, not dating back into bygone history.

In view of these many virtues it seems a sacrilege to mention the minor flaws that may exist. An outline of the Play proper follows:

A modest married couple become inoculated with the fever of extravagance and rob the baby's bank to inaugurate a life of high speed which ends in neglect of the youngster.

Mr. Dodd has made two departures from his plans and specifications. In the random execution of his theme he has needlessly tarnished the mother by an escapade with another man. This incident does not contribute to the main Plot and really belongs in a separate story of moral turpitude. To round off the sentimental history of two other characters in the Play he has thrown in a love story.

Neither of these excrescent growths belong technically to the Play proper. The first is a surrender to the temptation for added situation even at the expense of dramatic disunity. The second is a concession to the traditional demand for sex love interest. This tends to vitiate the true theme of violated parental love.

You cannot employ all the primitive laws of Nature, Mr. Dodd. Concentrate on the one physically defined by your Plot. Reserve the others for the great Plays "The Dramatist" predicts you are destined to write and you will soon attain that ideal we have so patiently been preaching.

THY NEIGHBOR'S WIFE.

Even the Comedietta Must Have Conflict.

Here is the gist of the Play.

Two husbands become enamored of each other's wives. Their spouses affect an exchange of the particular attributes that disenchant their fickle mates and a reconciliation is accomplished.

All dramatic analysts from Aristotle to Anthony agree that the elemental essence of drama is a contention of opposing forces. To ignore this fundamental law simply because a Play

happens to assume the character of a farce is a serious blunder. A prolonged discussion of household infelicities does not serve as a substitute. To omit all semblance of Conflict deprives a farce of dramatic interest just as finally as any other form of drama.. There must be contest of some sort. And in the end a triumph of one force over the other.

“Thy Neighbor’s Wife” has an overabundance of woe and wail, but no actual symptoms of dramatic strife. The estrangement between the two couples is so hollow that an audience cannot be persuaded to accept it even as a farcical illusion. And this robs the character of reality. It is the element of strife that creates character. Without this factor the portrayal of personality is impossible. The people of this Play, therefore, never for a moment exist even in the make-believe for the motives that actuate them are transparently the mechanical wires of the author.

And how may we remedy this negative? By supplying the absent factor, of course. An entertaining farce could be manufactured of this material by injecting some plausable Conflict and propounding a panacea. For the real Play must have something to say. Some solution in the present case must be offered for married couples temporarily disenchanted.

In “The Concert” a very valid remedy is recommended in behavior of the wife who allows her infant-genius of a husband to live with another woman long enough to miss the motherly attention his able-minded mate administered. By strong contrast of character born of tangible Conflict these people spring to life in the composite mind of the audience.

Suppose Mr. Elmer Harris had pursued a like policy. Suppose that instead of the tame divorce a double elopement were substituted, giving some grounds for credulity. Let something happen. Let there be doubt as to the issue. In the present manuscript no child could foster the remotest shadow of suspense as to the outcome.

The thing that Mr. Harris has conceived is good material. He has failed to inject the dramatic germ. The test of his genius would be dramatization of this latent energy. He could find no better study in his present state of evolution as a dramatist.

THE WITNESS FOR THE DEFENSE.

Devoid of Human Concern and Interest.

The difference between building a Play to embody a theme and preaching a sermon in dialog disguise is amply exemplified in “Speed” and “The Witness for the Defense.” “Speed” conveys its moral through dramatic appeal to parental instinct. “The Witness for the Defense” advances Ibsen’s “A Wild

Duck" theory that the truth fiend is a confirmed mischief maker. Mr. A. E. W. Mason is so bent on propagating his moral that he fails to clothe it with a practicable plot founded on the infallible basis of human emotion.

The one semblance of strife in the piece is the effort of a young man's relatives to dig up the evidence of a murder for which his fiancee has been tried and acquitted. But this Conflict carries no conviction. We know the murder was justifiable and no serious doubts are entertained as to the young man's attitude when he learns the whole truth. The dramatic force of the Plot hinges entirely on this one event.

A more serious flaw undermines what Action might be generated out of this situation. The audience does not care! Their sympathies are not involved. The boy may marry the widow or chuck her, it's no odds to us. Neither candidate for matrimony awakens the slightest solicitude in our souls. The slight partiality that is created by the author rather inclines us toward his villain whom he has intended us to despise. There is no homage for the hero-elect.

A good Play might be built of this dormant material. A Conflict must be invented of sufficient reality to enable us to take sides in the issue. Without this appeal to partisanship there is little possibility of conviction. It is through this blinding sympathy for one factor in the combat that the auditor becomes thoroughly controlled by illusion.

THE RACK.

Deception Mars the Big Moment.

This is the Plot in a nutshell.

Problem.

1. A husband is arraigned for the murder of his wife's lover.

2. A third party confesses to the crime.
3. The husband is exonerated.

The second clause of this syllogism is the mainspring of Plot. It is the prime Cause out of which the entire action-takes genesis. At a glance it will be seen that the second clause is in no way identified with the first and that the third is not a product of the other two. It is merely a chance result of the second. The issue is not joined. The whole Play hinges on this murder but in the end the crime is shown to be no part and parcel of the Conflict proper but merely a biproduct of history connected with the lover's prior escapades. Mr. Buchanan has dodged the issue. Instead of reaching his Conclusion by a legitimate manipulation of his own materials he resorts to the lame device of an outside source.

And this flaw is accelerated by a violation of the oldest canon known in dramatic law. "Thou shalt not deceive thy audience!" Authors may trifle with an audience as to the eventual outcome of Plot but we are unable to point to a successful Play on record that deliberately juggles with the visible event to the degree that seeing is not believing.

The husband is repeatedly shown to be lurking about the premises where the lover is attempting to seduce the wife. At the critical moment the wife's cry is answered by a vigorous knock at the door and we have every reason to believe it the husband! We see two shots fired just outside the door and the lover staggers in mortally wounded. The positive conviction is imparted that the husband killed him for this is the line of least resistance rightfully indicated for the spectator to construct by. It is the only interpretation in keeping with Conflict and the logical course for the man to take. Any attempt at extraneous surprise at this point constitutes willful deception on the part of the dramatist.

To be sure he has prepared us with knowledge of a third man's presence on the premises but he is not presented to us in the attitude of malice or revenge and the history of his grudge against the libertine is so miserably obscured by a chaotic ensemble in Act I that nothing really crosses the foot-lights. Besides, we are watching one Play and this Conflict is quite another. Keep your finger on the trigger, Mr. Buchanan. You have a live topic and a timely one. You let the gun go off halfcocked when you shot that wretch and converted a good Play into a melodrama. Your chance for social inquisition in closer Unity with theme is a trial for divorce and not murder. The same excellence of court room representation devoted to the unjust divorce of a woman whom we could hold sympathy for would make a better Play.

But can an audience have faith in a woman who professes to love her husband and risks incurring his everlasting alienation by accompanying a moral leper to a disreputable road house for the ostensible mission of reconciling him to his estranged wife? And if she were so rashly imprudent would she consent to dine and wine with the libertine knowing that the other guests were not coming and that the bedroom adjoins on the left? Is this the stuff that sympathetic heroines are made of?

But all these attributes could be changed. Adequate Cause could be supplied to bring about the identical situations and yet retain solicitude for the young wife placed in this predicament. By shifting the motif from self-preservation to sex-love the melodrama might become a Play on a higher plane exploiting a moral of pronounced merit.

A MAN OF HONOR.

The Remarkable Work of a Rabbi.

What the disciplined mind will do to the drama is well shown by the arrival of Rabbi Landman after a brief systematic study of the Science of Play Construction. He has drawn a role to fit one of our best actors with a strong bold stroke. The structure is much more consistent logically than the average work of the professional playwright as may be seen from the following hypothesis.

1. A judge's son has embezzled money from a magnate.
2. The magnate uses this fact to hamper justice.
3. Exposure of attempted bribery defeats the magnate.

In the development of his Plot Dr. Landman has introduced an interesting turn of affairs. The judge is ripe for political promotion. The disgrace of his son's crime will blast this hope. But the father determines his boy must suffer the penalty. A strong situation! There would be more suspense, however, if the author were to direct the constructive imagination of the auditor by cleverly implying that the magnate's attempted bribery is slipping the noose about his own neck. To desert the audience at end of II with no tangible thread to follow is bad treatment. To make the judge a little more energetic in the matter of seeking evidence to convict the scamp who has openly attempted bribery would add strength to the leading character.

The weakest factor in the Play is the preacher's attempt to force his sermon into the text. He has a burning desire to show what parental neglect may lead to. The idea is wedged into the Play rather than an integral part of it. The author attempts to show this neglect with the one hand and with the other exercises undue restraint to prevent a parent's sympathy. The son is repeatedly rebuffed by the father. But the boy does not hint the extremity of his peril. The author restrains him to enhance neglect. It might be hard for a son to tell his father that he had stolen money, but the exigency of the situation would compel him to hint in some way that imprisonment was staring him in the face.

The theory of parental neglect rests heavily on this one incident. There are other touches of it but a strong effect is attempted at the end of Act I by a picture of the boy beating his fists against the door of the stern parent who has locked him out. There is a keen lack of conviction here. The boy is an abnormal child for not doing what the average creature would do under the circumstances. The father is not amenable for neglecting something he does not know exists. The naked hand of the dramatist is revealed.

In the big scene in II, therefore, when the lad turns on his father and charges him with filial default, the point does not carry. The soul of the spectator is not so much impressed with the indifference of the parent as with the untimely death of a loving mother. We regret that she could not have lived to properly rear her son. But even this is aside from the trend of theme which is to show the unfailing retribution attending corruption and bribe. The duty of parent to child would better fit another Conflict. The attempt to kill two birds with a single stone results in maiming either. Let the lesson teach this law, Mr. Landman, that Conflict is ever paramount and to launch an idea dramatically you must conceive a struggle consistent with your theme.

T H E R E A L T H I N G .

A Most Unreal Dramatic Document.

Problem.

1. A wife mollycoddles her children to the neglect of her husband.
2. A sister discovers the husband's attachment for a young girl.
3. She teaches the wife to reclaim her husband by disciplining her children.

This is the hypothesis of the main Plot evidently intended by the author. It is badly confuddled by two branch Plots that hopelessly bury any distinct outline of the author's purpose.

Plot number two threatens to become the real Play. It provides the sentiment role for Henrietta Crosman who plays the leading part. No doubt the effort to create this acting opportunity for a star accounts for hitching on extraneous matter in this crude fashion. An attempt is made to pad up a complication out of the fact that the sister's old lover proposes to her before learning that she is a widow. She thinks that he thinks that her husband still lives. She learns that he has learned and all is well. A flimsy device to build a Play about but Miss Crosman relies on this situation for her biggest moment.

The third Plot is a step-plot of Plot number two. The husband of Plot number one is jealous of the lover of Plot number two for making love to the mother of the mollycoddled kids. This is only a momentary aberration of the dramatic conscience, to be sure, but it serves as an excellent example of minor disunity. It is a danger signal for the dramatist aimlessly reeling off lines without dominant dramatic purpose.

Temptations are ever at hand for the imagination that can be seduced by a clever situation. An indomitable will backed by technical discretion must reject the spurious combinations that beset the fertile productive mind.

Catherine Chisholm Cushing, the author of this Comedy, possesses a rare gift of fluent dialog composition. It is a faculty she will never have occasion to test thoroughly till she can build a Plot worthy of such embellishment. In the abstract it is a tendency to restrain rather than encourage. It is difficult to appreciate that mere talk is the worst of all barriers for the beginner. This is painfully apparent in two whole acts of "The Real Thing." These depend wholly upon clever conversation of characters not motivated to speak Plot parts.

The first Act contains a single incident of dramatic worth. The husband kisses the girl. If the rest of the main Plot could be executed by real drama of this sort the Play would be fully dramatized. Throughout the rest of the comedy there is not a solitary instance of Plot event. All is TALKED into the audience. After talking us in and out of the two subordinate Plots an attempt is made to TALK a Conclusion onto the fragment that survives of main issue. But this is not really accomplished even by way of conversation. We are left to presume that all will be well now that wifie drinks claret punch, wears stylish dresses and puts her kidlets to bed with the chickens.

S N O B S

A Farce With Foreign Finish.

Suppose you were playing checkers. The critical moment arrives. Your partner flashes the ace of spades and shouts: "The game's mine!" That would be equivalent to the fallacious reasoning employed in the Conclusion of "Snobs."

A newly bequeathed duke loves a girl who doesn't know of his title. The only flaw in his flirtation is the lack of a thrill sufficient to captivate his young enchantress. Thus far we have a straight game of checkers, you see. But a second party insists on playing poker. He swats a third fellow over the head with a cane and by some mistake the duke is charged with the assault. The missing thrill is now supplied by a desperate battle in which the duke wrests a gun from the officer who is about to shoot him. The audience is requested to believe they are still watching a game of checkers.

Does this rude illustration drive home the absurdity of trying to play two games with one hand? Here is the widest gap in the structural framework of "Snobs." The Plot dashes off on a side track just as the Play is pulling into the terminal.

The Farce has one merit. It starts off with a definite forecast of the complications that might follow. The first Act is

shown, not TALKED. But nothing comes of this good promise. The second Act is the crudest kind of hotchpotch teeming with disunity and spineless character drawing. The only possibility of a Play is in the rather implausible premises set forth in Act I.

A rich satire might be constructed out of the relations of a suddenly enriched milkman to a snobbish society fop who spurns the picklemaker's daughter destined to become wife of the hero, who in turn employs the snob as a financial flunkie. This is the legitimate structure that might be fitted to the foundations laid in Mr. Bronson-Howard's well planned first act.

T H E N E S T E G G .

Founded on a Single Thread of Novelty.

How far a little touch of novelty may go toward the success of a Play may be seen in "The Nest Egg." Swamped beneath biplots of puppy love and old-time intrigue this clever note of satire on cold-storage-pure-food conditions wins in a few minutes' running. The real Plot consumes but one minute of the first act, two minutes of the second and three of the third. The remaining time is given over to juvenile capers of a very commonplace order.

The legitimate story of the Play tells of a spinster who inscribed her sentiments on an egg. The egg goes to cold storage and after three years the old maid is summoned as chief witness in a suit against the culprits who preserved it overtime. The elated spinster mistakes this message from a pure food fanatic for the call of cupid. Her clever testimony wins the case, however, and consummates her original purpose of matrimony.

Any ordinary dreamer might build optimistic anticipation of the unique entertainment to be derived from the actual development and unfolding of this story from the first incident of lettering the egg down to the final episode of culminating connubiality.

But what does the amateur author offer us?

Nine tenths of the performance is taken up with irrelevant minor Plot conveying four distinct and separate stories extraneous to the main Play.

From the beginning no one could guess the purpose of the composition. We are introduced with much obvious effort and talk to the vicissitudes of a young girl whose father insists upon marrying her to a wealthy bumpkin.

Joined to this tangent is a second offshoot of a college girl's romance with the first girl's brother.

Plot number three is the mysterious intervention of an adventuress of the old school stripe, who bolts in upon the heart affairs of the other couples and mixes motives generally.

The fourth is the mercenary intrigue to rob the spinster of her hen-house which has suddenly loomed into large value.

None of these spurious episodes have anything to do with the advancement of the main issue. The author has cleverly dove-tailed them into an actable vehicle, to be sure, but to label such chaotic incongruity a Play would be analytic perjury in the first degree.

The substance of a light comedy of extremely novel character is conveyed in the remnants of main Plot that are scattered through the manuscript. The spinster is a fresh, life-like type with a gift of bright dialog that would do credit to a technically perfect reconstruction of the Play's hypothesis.

And here we have painful evidence of the starved conditions of the contemporary stage. Sixteen weeks was accorded this little piece at the Bijou Theatre in New York City! Despite the encumbrance this slender thread of live novelty won substantial box-office benefits and brought forth a clamor of praise from the critics famishing for want of unadulterated dramatic nourishment.

A MILLION.

A Farce with a Philosophy.

It sounds like a paradox to say that a farce has a philosophy and that it actually thrills, but this is the fact in "A Million" now being tried on the road by Henry W. Savage. And what a rare treat in this new season of horse-play productions! The theme delivers a satirical slap at the city sleuths whose eyes are blinded by their own veritable adroitness. The Play holds the audience in breathless suspense over the simple device of a lost blue blouse containing a prize winning lottery ticket. The piece makes no pretense at intellectual uplift but its dramatic merit well deserves the closest study of the dramatist. The few flaws that mar the road try outs will doubtless be effaced in rehearsal. The American version is by Leo Dietrichstein, who in addition to rebuilding the Plot has converted vulgar French farce into fairly refined English. And this is a tremendous task!

MAGGIE PEPPER.

The Decline of Mr. Klein.

Save for the subtle selection of popular Play materials there is little in this melodrama to identify it with such Plays as "The Gamblers" or even "The Third Degree." And under

the circumstances of production it is difficult to determine whether the audience is not applauding Miss Rose Stahl for what she has been in another role. Both earlier dramas may boast of an underlying idea. "Maggie Pepper" appeals to the littlest, meanest and shallowest of human emotions only.

But Mr. Klein's decline is evidently not intentional. In an article recently written for the New York "Sun" he regrets the cruelty of the playgoing public and declares the day of romanticism is past. Surely no piece on earth is calculated to test this truth better than this playwright's latest product. If it can draw after the public learns that Rose Stahl in "Maggie" is not the Rose Stahl of several seasons past, Mr. Klein will be disputing his journalism by his own playwriting. For this Play is the quintessence of romanticized junk.

But the sad side of the situation is the fact that a writer of means will stoop to such sordid stuff after proving himself capable of about the best work on the American stage. And all in hopeless pursuit of the mere mercenary.

The two Plots of "Maggie Pepper" are as follows:

1. A shop girl wins the heart of her rich employer against the courtship of a stylish sweetheart.
2. A shop girl is bled and blackmailed by the parents of a child she endeavors to preserve from their criminal influence.

In the first Plot the crudest sort of dime novel envy characterizes the courtship of the sweetheart; aided and abetted by her preposterous uncle. Poor "Maggie" is batted all over the field in G. minor and wears the shreds of her splintered heart on her sleeve. She is fired twice by express command of the author even against the wishes of the firm that employs her. The common sense of the audience is not reckoned with. For some unknown reason "Maggie" despairs the wealthy employer and seeks to reconcile him to his jealous sweetheart. The author finds it necessary to put a bullet through his hero before "Mag" will surrender her celibacy. His drunken proposal almost fetches her, but the author's brutality does the trick. She at once takes sides with the spineless hero who has been so cruelly treated by the man who brought him to imaginary life.

The second Plot seems an attempt to link "Deep Purple" coloring with cheap sentimentality of the old school. It is with the most obvious effort that this spurious story gets a-going in the first act of the legitimate Play. The machinery of one Plot has to be stopped abruptly whilst the other starts a competitive spin. But the second Plot has the biggest buzz

saw for the blackmailer cuts his way into the presence of unhappy lovers everytime there is any prospect of a peaceful moment. He is no respecter of millionaire's offices and young ladies' private apartments. He busts right in.

There is no doubt that the second Play mars and retards the force of the first, but it is only on the rarest occasion that even a spot of drama is demonstrated in either Plot worth preserving. In the last moments of the second scene of the third act there is a suggestion for a theme that might be availed by a man of Mr. Klein's ability. The sheer efficiency of this pathetic shop girl fits her for the office of mother to the boobyish inebriate. A strong satire on class distinction might be constructed out of this suggestion. The Play bears some such message as it is. But any interpretation is impossible in the chaotic jumble cheap complications dispensed.

P U B L I S H E D P L A Y S .

Three Plays by Shaw.*

The Doctor's Dilemma, Getting Married, and The Showing-Up of Blanco Posnet.

Shaw has written these Essays for any of three purposes! To amuse himself, to furnish food for the reading public, or to be performed before an audience of strictly mental temperaments. Although Drama is supposed to be an interpretation of life Shaw finds it necessary to write one hundred pages of interpretation for a forty page Playlet. That such intellectual fodder is unfit for the digestion of contemporary audiences is beyond a doubt. Fad and vanity may muster a limited attendance to such offerings but there is little actual interest in them for the play going public.

Few men on earth can rival Shaw for sustained brilliance of biting sarcasm but for young writers to set up his works as models would be the uttermost folly. Of the better brand of drama Mr. Shaw has just as much to learn as many novices at least if we are to judge his Art by his later specimens of craftsmanship. These do not show an adequate knowledge of Play, Logic, Sequence, Unity or Plot. His strong qualifications are Scene Structure, Characterization, and Dialog. All more or less remote from their functions in a Play.

THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA.

If we could compress the first twenty pages of the first Act into four or five, at most, the remaining ten would be drama. If we could really know whether the young Artist is married

*Brentano's. New York. Price \$1.50.

to his wife before the other characters bring up the question there would be dramatic force in the blow he aims at the scandal mongers.

The same is true of the widow's second marriage in the interval following Act IV. Nobody really knows but the Author. He doesn't supply our emotions with the elements of suspense. He seeks to surprise us in the stilly darkness. The Newspaper man is a clever caricature of the progressive press-agent-highwayman, but he is no factor in the Play. He would fit in a frame by himself for a vaudeville exhibition more adequately than he answers here. Ibsen would have found a plot purpose for this character. He would have employed him to advance the story. Shaw throws him in for the Author's amusement.

There is no logic in a man's asking a strange married woman to act as hostess at his stag party and no pretense at conforming the common sense situation is made. A highly clever satire on the futile and conflicting theories of eminent medical men is conceived but not dramatized. Shaw has a definite purpose but betrays an indefinite knowledge for executing it in dramatic form. "The Doctor's Dilemma" is tedious discourse in **FIVE** Acts.

GETTING MARRIED and THE SHOWING-UP OF BLANCO POSNET.

Not much can be said of either of the other Plays in this volume. Both are perfumed with wit. Even through the stage directions the playful pen of the satirist dances nimbly. But far less semblance of Drama is discernable. His intentions are plain to the thinking reader but such great gulps of intellectual hard tack cannot be swallowed by any composite audience under the sun.

The day may come when dialogued essay will supplant oratory. But to grant such literature a place in power with drama is quite another question. The orator may reach the intellect and rouse the will of the individual capable of auto-suggestion. But the ideal drama may transform the souls of the multitude by the spell of the playbuilder's art.

"The Dramatist" is for DRAMA, here, now and for all time!

THREE PLAYS BY BRIEUX MATERNITY.

By a Modern French Problem Playwright.

In a volume of three Plays by Brieux* this drama appears in two versions. These are helpful study for the novitiate.

*Brentano's, New York, \$1.50.

They show the power to be gained by adjusted Sequence, reduction of cast and creation of new character demanded by Plot. It is a privileged peep into the workshop of the dramatist.

Of course, our chief interest in analysing the work of a member of the French Academy is his comparative progress in the Science of Play Construction. In a word his theses are more vital and his treatment less dramatic than our best American dramatists. We have few thinkers among our dramatic writers who would attempt such advanced themes. But we have craftsmen who could take these materials ready-made and interpret them with more telling force.

Brieux falls short at the finale just where we most crave conviction. "Maternity" is capably handled in Acts I and II save for an occasional lack of motive in the Dialog. The author compels his characters to speak, at times, instead of endowing them with compulsion. He occasionally permits them to talk to themselves. But there is no mistaking the power of his theme. He has stripped all social definitions of delicacy to present a radical phase of the subject of propagation of the species. There is little doubt of the selling qualities of such a raw Conflict theatrically speaking. Setting aside the author's choice of subject, then, let us see where he has forsaken his art whilst he drives his pen to the profit of pure pamphleteering.

The main story of "Maternity" tells of a woman whose "race-suicide" husband forces two degenerate children upon her in the fulfillment of his professed reform. The Conflict rises to a climax of actual rape committed by brute force in the exercise of a drunken husband's "rights."

Joined to this idea is a secondary story of the wife's younger sister who has been ruined by an outsider we never meet. The confession of her downfall is one of the most potent scenes in the book. Despite its telling force, however, and its conformity to theme, it does not reinforce the main idea for the reason that it is not joined. The author would do well to choose between the two plays and then concentrate.

In Act III he deserts both Plots. Whatever Conclusion is reached is proclaimed from the lecture platform and not the stage. A court room scene is represented. In the absence of true dramatization this becomes nothing more than a mock trial. The author sets forth numerous instances of mere life in unison with his theme and tells us the fate of both our heroines. But the Conflict proper has ceased to exist. Drama sleeps while thematic testimony flourishes. The Play that the audience wants to see has transpired somewhere else and we get nothing but the crumbs from the conversation of the witnesses.

This does not mean that an actual representation of the wife's abortion is advised even though the author's Plot demands that the audience receive this evidence in tangible form. Treatment similar to the best manipulation of exceedingly delicate items in Acts I and II would sufficiently visualize the denouement of the intended Play without an actual clinic. The stage must deal with just such problems, some day. America is evidently not ready for them. Another Play in this printed volume deals with the dangers of Syphilis. It is called "Damaged Goods." The third Play is "The Three Daughters of M. Dupont."

By Request,

M I D -C H A N N E L . *

Far Inferior to "The Thunderbolt."

An indifferent husband countenances the flirtations of his middle-aged wife with younger admirers. The couple quarrel and separate. She has an affair with a worthless youth whom she does not really love and the husband takes up with a sporting widow. After a surfeit of this sensuality a reconciliation is attempted. The husband admits his infidelity and wrings a like confession from the wife. Out of conventional rectitude he insists that she marry her paramour. Finding this course impossible she kills herself.

The foregoing is an abstract synopsis of Mr. Pinero's Play. It is moral because the conclusion does not exalt the illicit relation. But it is not helpful. It offers no new solution of the debasing marital problem it presents. Perhaps the best that can be said of the Play is that it handles incidents of salacious sex profligacy with antiseptic delicacy.

The chief characters are devoid of sympathetic appeal for the reason that the Conflict is not founded upon a vital Law of life. It may have been the author's intention to involve the love of the sexes, but a careful analysis of the structure reveals no evidence of genuine affection. This emotion is depicted only in the negative.

The motives of the principals are obviously worked by the wires of the dramatist. They are not the logical effect of Cause. The author desires them to do certain stunts for his own convenience and fails to involve their motives in the Plot.

Another grave deficit is Dramatization. Few of the essential incidents of the Play take place on the stage. One of the vital events of Plot occurs in Italy and has to be imported by means of subsequent TALK between the principals. There is but one important Scene really enacted—the attempted recon-

*W. H. Baker & Co., Boston, 50c.

ciliation of the marital degenerates. The wife's confession almost rivals Bernstein for similar situations in both "The Thief" and "Israel." The final suicide is not clearly presented. It is established by after allusion with no definite visual evidence to confirm the imagination of the audience.

D O U B L E C R O S S .

Withholds the Secret of Suspense.

In the January 1911 issue we analyzed a skit called "Interviewed" which appeared in the November 1910 "Smart Set" magazine. "Double Cross" appears in the August 1911 issue of the same magazine written by the same author, Roi Cooper Megrue. No better illustration of the invisible shade between fiction and drama could well be contrived.

And the problem is well worth weighing, for here we have abstract dialog that bears every similarity to dramatic diction save for the one technical point. Instead of wasting such composition on mere magazine space this author might be drawing handsome theatrical royalties. What is this absent item of dramatic interest?

Suspense for the reader is superior knowledge withheld from him. Suspense for the theatregoer is superior knowledge imparted to him but withheld from one or more of the characters on the stage. Now what superior knowledge is withheld from the audience in this skit that should have been merely the ignorance of one of the characters on the stage?

The cardinal fact that the highwayman is a telegraph operator himself.

Mr. Megrue undoubtedly thought he was enhancing the thrill by reserving this secret for the final touch. But think for a moment how lame the present suspense might seem compared with the subtle action obtained by our knowing all along that the poor station agent is being taken in. Suppose by silent gesture we ascertain that the robber is interpreting the telegraphic dispatch which the agent pretends to be sending to avert a wreck. Suspense is increased a thousandfold!

But do not carry this theory to excess. Do not understand us to say that every item of Plot should be baldly exposed to the audience. We need not know, for instance, that the message is a call for help. We merely see that the hold-up man understands it. It is time enough when help materializes. How rapidly the imagination makes the reckoning! "Now what will happen? Will the burglar return? What will he do to them?" And the acme of dramatic art is attained. The dramatist has his audience thinking the way he wants them to think. Letting them in on the vital secret is not subtracting

from the climax it is multiplying tensity! Master this tiny trick of theatics and you have one of the most potent principles of dramatization.

DRAMATIC LAWS ARE NOT NEW.

"If any one place in a continued series, moral speeches, sayings, and sentiments well framed, he will not produce that which is the work of Playwriting; but that will be much more a Play, which uses these things as subordinate, and which contains a fable and combination of incidents."

ARISTOTLE, 440 B. C.

FACING DEATH.

Plan for Reconstruction.

One of the students of the Institute of the Drama submits the following outline for a closer dramatization of Strindberg's one-act Play which appears in full in the July, 1911 number.

Plot.

Durand has bought candles with the last penny of household funds. His daughters denounce his extravagance. They are actually in need of bread. What use are the candles? He has wrecked the family fortune. Their dead mother told them so. He asks for a match. They begrudge it to him. He reminds them that they have the house and that he has paid off the encumbrance against it. They retort that the property is unmarketable. Durand slyly places a lighted candle near some straw in the attic window. A storm is brewing. He cautions the girls to put out the kitchen fire. No insurance will be paid if a fire breaks out from that source. We see the flames licking the roof! He gives instructions where to find the fire insurance policy. He bids them all farewell. He is going away. The helpless daughters reproach him for deserting them. Their mother had predicted it would end that way. He breaks his long silence and refutes the legacy of lies passed down by his deceased wife. He vaguely implies that they will be provided for. He asks for a glass of water. We see him mixing a tablet which we suspect is poison from his broad hints at inviting death. The fire is now under way. Durand gulps down the poison greedily. The girls discover the fire! They would save their father who has apparently gone to sleep. He is dead! They repent their cruelty to him. This is the journey he alluded to! The fire insurance policy! They rescue it from the flames! They realize that the old man has thus provided for them. His last sacrifice in death!

Yes, this is a much more feasible working plan. The audience receives the ingredients of dramatic interest in better Sequence. Many of Strindberg's original lines might be preserved by closer application and motive.

This is the real process of Playwriting. Now let some one continue the task of reconstruction employing the above synopsis and redialog the skit and further analysis will be made in the January 1912 issue.

SEND us the names of persons interested in playwriting and we will reward your efforts with a portrait of Shakesphere; something entirely new.

The Dramatist,
Easton, Pa.

The DRAMATIST

LUTHER B. ANTHONY, Editor

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QUARTERLY

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Our Doctrines Endorsed

The acceptance of the principles of dramatic technology is advancing by leaps and bounds. For a time our radical doctrines were unsupported by current Plays and by the critics. We have from time to time pointed out practical examples of successful drama that embody our theories. We now quote a few prominent American authorities who voice our views.

CHARLES FROHMAN:

One of the best signs of the advance in modern dramatic technic is the disappearance of the sub-plot.

DAVID BELASCO:

A good rule for the dramatist is to eliminate everybody he possibly can. In this way do we get simplicity and directness.

BRANDER MATTHEWS:

A Plot must deal with a struggle. It must show a clash of contending desires.

WM. A. BRADY:

A knowledge of the drama of the past will teach what ought to be avoided in the drama of the present.

AUGUSTUS THOMAS:

In the theatre nothing is dependent upon our faculty of visualization. It is all done for us.

CLAYTON HAMILTON:

Tell your story to the eye, for actions speak louder than words: — This has become the leading principle of the best dramatists.

JOHN CORBIN:

Thesis plays are false at once to Art and polemics.

HARTLEY DAVIS:

The play that wins is the one that appeals to the big universals stirring the emotions that most of us have in common.

WILLIAM C. deMILLE:

Build your pantomime first, then add such words as will help the picture.

These few words are quoted as being in line with the drift of advanced criticism and conviction. It is significant that they happen to endorse the doctrines you have repeatedly read in these columns. All technic is founded upon basic principles inherited from the past. It has taken centuries to develop the art. Each age amends it so that it may exercise a greater charm for the contemporary spectator. In theory, we cannot enlarge, perceptibly, upon the groundwork laid by Aristotle. We can only refine his rules and apply them more closely to the Audience we collaborate with.

To our many subscribers who send us extracts from various journals declaring them an appropriation of our ideas; we address the foregoing paragraph. If our radical beliefs are being copied. Copy away, we say! The bulk of our knowledge in any line is taken on trust from those who have tested the truth. It is the truth we are after. It is the truth we are eternally endeavoring to disseminate. We have no wish to monopolize it. We only wish to see it applied.

Those who conscientiously quote or urge our doctrines, therefore, are promoting the avowed policy of this periodical. And in so far as we anticipate the newer standards to which the art has approached, all followers must imitate if they would keep pace with the quickstep of progress.

THE RETURN OF PETER GRIMM.

A Triumph of the Two Davids.

Just how long this piece would last without a Belasco to stage it and a Warfield to act it is a problem in scientific salesmanship. The Dramatic element is no factor in this calculation. It is not a Play, it is a fad, and the duration of its run will be a tribute to the reputation of these two masters, aided by the eternal eagerness for a peep into the realm of spookdom —a guess at the riddle of the universe. This combination may

fill the Belasco Theatre for weeks to come. Its popularity should not mislead the amateur. It is not a safe pattern to follow. One such novelty is enough. The combined efficiency of these two men has made it marketable only after three years' incessant toil.

We have said that it is not a Play. What then? It is a public seance of psychic experiment designed to represent a popular theory of spirit phenomena. It is virtually devoid of dramatic illusion even in momentary spots. For Plays cannot be built out of superstitions that are rejected by the great mass of people constituting the theatre audience. A good entertainment is possible when such infinite pains are employed. But the author attempts to visualize an invisible thing which most of us cannot sanction even as a superstition. No dominant idea or moral could be conveyed by such a structure. It must leave the audience on the same level of thought where it finds them. There is no basis of credibility to lend composite conviction.

Apart from the invalid material utilized in this piece, the technical errors are fundamental. One of the most radical of these is a failure to set the Conditions of the Conflict Squarely before the audience.

Problem.

Conditions: Grimm betroths his adopted daughter to a libertine.

Cause: His suffering spirit returns to apprise her of his mistake.

Conclusion: She is governed by this supernatural message.

These conditions call for our knowledge of the libertine. They also specify that Grimm knows. After an author once determines his Conflict he has no choice in the matter. He must follow its dictates or dismiss the Conflict. Mr. Belasco fails to do this. Instead of setting out with the true facts at beginning of his Play nothing reaches us till Peter returns from the spirit world. He is innocent of having committed any wrong but still he returns to rectify it. He is going to make good something he never knew to be bad. We are told that one of the angels whispers this scandal to Peter. If this is to be the case surely the audience should know about it. There is no art in withholding from us what is going to happen. It is the manner of happening that should be the surprise. For we pay to see the Play! It is a breach of good faith to report it as happening in heaven.

How much more effective would it be had Peter wilfully pledged his word to a man he knew to be corrupt. His spirit would then have some cause for post-mortem reproach. If Peter and the audience both know this libertine's past how much keener is our interest in the transmission of this spirit message to the innocent girl. We then share the suspense. As it is we are held for surprise under the misconception that depriving us of the Plot is promoting the drama. There can be no suspense if the elements that furnish it are withheld.

The next flagrant error is the theatrical trickery of Peter's exit to spiritland with the form of the dead child. By this time the child has ceased to be an integral part of the Plot. There is nothing at issue. The Dramatic Conflict has expired. The author continues his Play in the life beyond merely to round out his supernatural episodes.

The treatment of this extraneous device is extremely poetic. After a most delicately rendered fantasy of the youngster's dream of Happyland, he dies. Peter picks him up and the two depart this mundane sphere. The Doctor gasps to find no child on the sick boy's cot. He lifts the sheet and; Presto! We have a deceased duplicate just as convincing as the two Topsy's in "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

But we have said very little of the virtues in this remarkable product. Some of the comedy built upon the expectation of Peter's death and the expectation of those who survive him is exquisitely rich and perennially human. It is valid because it is used to depict the progress of Plot. The Scene that ranks first in dramatic power is the spirit's effort to warn the girl not to marry the leper whom the mortal Peter had picked out for her. After a harrowing struggle the ghost finally succeeds in communicating its tardy message through the medium of the sick child whose frail spark of life now flickers at the gate of eternity. The force of this Scene almost establishes momentary illusion. Its tug at our sympathies is extremely potential. Absorbed in this poor soul's vicissitudes we all but accept the too human spectre as the shade of a departed spirit.

Taken all in all, Mr. Belasco has pulled off the impossible with about as much plausibility as any living playwright could lend to it. To imagine what the dramatist of average theatrical sagacity would do with this elusive subject gives rise to a suppressed cachination of chuckles!

P A S S E R S - B Y .

A Plot That Successfully Preaches.

Just as "The Price" exploits the narrowest and meanest convention of the "fallen woman," so "Passers-by" preaches the noblest and ripest sermon of altruism. The unusual turn

in this treatment is the fact that a woman repudiates this convention, not through maudlin sentimentality but the biggest and fullest sympathy of her sex; the maternal instinct.

Problem.

Condition: An adulterer is betrothed to another woman.

Cause: Her maternal instincts are aroused by his unlawful child.

Conclusion: She cancels the betrothal to unite the parents.

Here is a Plot with a purpose. The author feels a vigorous protest against a convention of society and assails it in a specific character-creating Conflict between certain human beings. This is the dramatic way of doing things. It is the only valid means of preaching in a Play. The Conflict tells the tale. The author cannot settle a problem for all time but he can convey his specific experience to the souls of his spectators in a way that stores the subjective mind with a lesson to profit by. Experience is the best teacher. A dramatic proxy is the nearest substitute. Let intellectual amateurs clamoring for uplift adopt this practical means of dramatic preaching. Auditors who take flight at the prospect of ethical discourse respond unconsciously to the exalted representation of their latent ideals on the stage.

This dramatized awakening of the altruism that sleeps in the worst of us is the surest appeal after all. It threatens to become the fourth and mightiest law of nature. 1. Self. 2. Sex. 3. Parentage. 4. Altruism.

“Passers-By” leads us to expect a Play implied in that title. In reality, those who stop off in the passing are mere sidesteps to Plot. The tramp is a convenience to practice the hero’s growing virtues on. He is later employed to turn the big trick of Plot by running off with the child. The child is believed kidnapped and the dismay of the unlawful parents visually discloses the adulterer to the fiancee.

The ‘passing-by’ of the adulteress is entirely too casual. Things do not happen without Cause in drama. A London fog is not sufficient reason for the coming of this girl at this particular time and place. Her entrance should be made inevitable for the sake of subconscious credibility. The same weakness tends to dispel illusion all through the conduct of this character. She comes to her former lover’s home because the author wills her to. Her rival surrenders the man too readily. True, she is actuated by the second premise, named in our Problem but the author takes her beyond this motive, making her a mere servile puppet in the reconciliation of the other pair.

But these are not flagrant deficiencies. The Play is pace-maker in the race we are now running for double-distilled, one-story drama. The poetic tenderness of the child's appeal to us for the formal alliance of its own parents is another tribute to the dramatic power of that great life Principle, the third law of Nature.

B O U G H T A N D P A I D F O R.

Success Scored by the Subsidiary Story.

Problem.

1. A husband demands his marital rights when drunk.
2. The wife leaves him because he will not promise to abstain.
3. The separation brings them to a reconciliation.

This is the broadest possible digest of "Bought and Paid For." The real Conflict of the Play is contained in the above. The striking features of originality however are merely the incidents in the chain of Cause and Effect that execute this Plot. The title itself is one of these incidents. It does not constitute a necessary ingredient in the Plot. It is the "punch" department.

Now the secret of the Play's success is quite another factor. This lies in the "comic relief" hitched on the main Plot. Do not understand us to minimize the merit of this biproduct. It is even worthy of separate treatment in a Plot all its own. In fact the prime Conflict is highly hackneyed. It is far inferior to the secondary story. Both stories are cleverly dovetailed and the first is made to sustain the second. This structural disunity almost defies detection in the playing, as will be shown in the following Plot:

A financier marries a telephone girl and supports her worthless brother-in-law. The girl leaves her husband after a brutal assault, virtually constituting a rape. In order to regain his position the brother-in-law tricks the pair into a reconciliation.

George Broadhurst is a trained fun builder and the half-witted, selfish, self-satisfied imp he has given us in the sub-plot of this production is one of the surest triumphs in his long list of comedy character creations. It is here and not in the grip of the bought-and-paid-for idea that his new Play ranks as one of the artistic and commercial successes of the season.

As a bold, clear-cut stroke in character etching this comic type compares favorably with Pinero's best work. And it bears the added charm of irresistible humor which is beyond Pinero's reach. Mr. Broadhurst is wise in clinging to this brand of humor in which he excels.

THE PRICE.

Technical Massacre and Moral Retrogression.

If the world were run on the moral standard advocated by "The Price" the tide of spiritual progress would soon turn toward a tendency of ethical retrogression. What is the moral of this play? Let us glance at the logical syllogism of its structure for a reply.

Problem.

1. A girl has been a mistress before marriage to another.
2. The diary of her deceased lover exposes this fact.
3. Her husband deserts her.

(Her husband suspects her of murder.)

Wouldn't the psychological inference be: There is no salvation for a woman who does likewise and conceals her sin? This is the subconscious lesson taught by the Play. Is it a wholesome one? Wouldn't history lose some of its staunchest agents for righteousness if this silly scruple had condemned every woman with a stain on her past? It is the antithesis of the regeneration Play—It is the degeneration Play. It fosters the doctrine of eternal damnation for mistakes of the past over which we have no control. Attention is called to it here, that writers and managers may avert like themes in choosing Plays for an optimistic public. Its moral outrages all three primal laws of nature; Self, Sex, and Parentage.

So much for the ethics of this Play. What about its technic? There is but one Play in New York City that surpasses it for trespassing the immutable principles of Play Construction. The characters are continuously operated by the brass wires of the author and some of them never breathe a solitary breath of dramatic life. They merely sniff the artificial atmosphere of stageland. Not even a mask of motive conceals the author's nude and ever present purpose. The manuscript teems with artifice and false intent.

The most glaring flaw in this Play is its fallacious syllogism. The second premise does not respond to the first. The twin Conclusions are supposed to spring from the first and second premises. The first Conclusion is an arbitrary product of them. But there is no basis in either premise for the secondary Conclusion. The Play might much more logically revolve around the killing of the wife's first lover, so far as any definite trend of Plot is indicated by the first act.

And again, the central premise is not dramatized. The diary does not turn up as a result of Plot Conflict. It is dropped into the Play by the extraneous agency of the first lover's

widow and without our knowledge of her intent. Her very presence is a deliberate stroke of the author. Both husband and wife would turn her out if their wills were not subordinated by the dramatist. Mr. Broadhurst evidently clings to the hard and fast fallacy that a surprise in the avowed purpose of the Play is good Drama. He does not recognize the keener craftsmanship of letting the audience know **WHAT** he is about and confining the surprise to **HOW** he will accomplish it.

It is gratifying to note, that this play has since been reduced to three acts and a happy ending substituted. This conforms to much of our criticizm and eliminates the two false conclusions, above cited.

A S I N G L E M A N .

Conflict Subordinated to Character.

When an actor's eminence may be relied upon to draw audiences, the Play may be regarded a secondary quantity. This is usually the case with Mr. John Drew, whose following is thoroughly organized. His present vehicle is no exception to this rule. Interest in the player exceeds interest in the part and the Conflict is subordinated to the leading character and to the man who plays it.

"A Single Man" has many momentary evidences of unusual dramatic skill but like all typical drawing-room-drama it is essentially artificial. These metallic qualities, however, afford wider opportunity for the player of society parts and for such specializing the piece serves its purpose. It is unnecessarily stretched out into four long acts by the obvious intention of the author who erects false barriers to keep his lovers separated. Toward the end this futile protraction borders on boredom.

Problem.

1. A bachelor loves a young girl of strenuous spirits.
2. In contrast to his sedate secretary her vivacity palls.
3. He marries the secretary.

This is an epitome of the real Plot. Attached to or suspended from this story is a spurious accompaniment of a preposterous coquette's brazen courtship of the single gentleman. She is the official agent of the author and has no valid place in the cast. Her motive is his motive in consequence she fails to live in the Play.

A dramatic Conflict has but two contending agencies. Each side may have hundreds of characters to fight its battles but the factions still remain but two. The coquette above mentioned attempts to supply a third factor in the struggle which, as may be seen from our Problem, has no place in the Plot. The result is rank disunity, almost to the brink of burlesque.

M A D A M E X.

A Whirlpool of Mother Emotion.

Although there are only three emotional principles in all the plays past, present and possible the variations of these laws of Nature are as endless as eternity.

Madame X is a variant of one of these; the love of a mother for her child. Her love does not draw her to her son. In this Plot it repels. She has sunk to the depths of depravity—but her maternal instinct is as chaste as before. It prompts her to demonstrate this love by sparing her boy the shame of a mother's degradation. We feel the sympathetic wrench at our heart-strings both through the principle of parentage that pulls and the pride that repels. It is peculiarly employed so as to produce both action and reaction.

Oscar Wilde achieved this same result in "Lady Windermeré's Fan." He built a much more skillful Plot but pitched his appeal in a lower key. "The Music Master" relies on a like racial trait when father and daughter are separated for the technical purpose of touching the parental chord in our souls. Here are three time-tried successes all based on the third law of life. Take notice dramatists! Here is a vital precept!

And the marvellous part of it is; this play succeeds in spite of its technical infirmities. Unity is fairly preserved. But a good deal of French triviality and irrelevance survives the translation. The rambling, shambling treatment of preliminary Conditions hinders the start rather than gets it going. A Prologue of utterly worthless history tells of things twenty years prior to the Play and the same period is reviewed in TALK after the Conflict proper is opened. This could all be artistically interwoven as incidental in other Scenes. Acts I and II are miserably developed. The threads of Plot merely drift into place.

There is but one well built Scene up to this point. It is the end of Act I where the blackguard strives to wring the secret of her past from our dope dazed heroine. This is the only evidence of actual Play Building that precedes the real drama of Act III. Now we have induced illusion that buries all semblance of the improbable in its wake. The Play makes good on the whole by the sheer magnitude of maternal love in this great act. It is a whirlpool of mother emotion!

And here is a glimpse of the great Drama to come. Two well sustained Acts of comparable structure, paving the way for the terrific climax in III would make this Play a pattern of technically sound melodrama. Add to this a dominant purpose or teaching and the ideal Play is achieved.

T H E O N L Y S O N .

Enough Good Stuff for a Masterpiece.

One great virtue in this Play is the fact that the characters at the Conclusion have evolved fifty leagues beyond their beginning. This is as it should be. The process of evolution, however, is not in accord with the customs of human conduct.

There is wealth of rich material. There are numerous instances of excellent dramatic treatment. Scores of delicately clever touches! But these are at fault in the very fact of their extraneous abundance. They are not contributing to that one chain of events known as a Plot.

But if all the spurious elements were extracted and the one direct path of legitimate Plot pursued, there would still remain a fundamental weakness to repair before making the Play palatable. This is the instance of the father informing his children that their mother has been unfaithful to him. It is not only loathsome but it is technically wrong.

The father has no motive for doing this hideous thing. Such a parent might exist but in a Play the Cause for this unusual conduct must be offered. And even then, the dramatic way to bring about the wife's exposure would be some incident whereby the awful truth is inevitably laid bare. It should not be a voluntary act of the husband's unless the Plot called for a fiend of that stripe.

And back of this logical flaw is the fact that the mother's sin is not dramatized. It comes to us in the form of tea-table gossip confirmed by a detective's discovery of her letters written to an artist. Miserable management! If it is expedient to introduce this atrocious episode, the only way to stamp it upon the imagination of the audience would be to visualize the infidelity. Mere recitation of the fact fails of conviction. The mother's confirmation of the sin in the presence of her children is past all human endurance. It so shocks the sensations that the auditor will repel rather than suffer the thought thereby dispelling the author's intended illusion. But there is much evidence of clever craftsmanship throughout the piece. Winchell Smith is a determined writer. It looks as though nothing could deter his ultimate success as a dramatist.

THE WIFE DECIDES.

A Little of Everything.

In classifying "The Price" we said there was but one worse specimen of Play Construction in New York. This is the one. Thomas McKean has taken no chances on missing the popular chord. He has sounded them all. In three long acts we have:—a touch of Suffrage and Sociology; a little dash of Eugenics; the traditional fat man counter-comedy; a false alarm of burglars; the girl who hopelessly loves a married man; the husband who chokes his wife into a stage picture; the servants who play a little plot of their own; a girl who departs this life to become a nun; the entire cast drift to Reno for a divorce and finally husband and wife are reconciled.

This is a remarkable compound for one evening's entertainment! It would be difficult enough to adequately accomplish all these themes in a dozen distinct dramas. But Mr. McKean has endeavored to serve them up at one sitting without regard to rhyme or reason. The remotest notion of a harmony between parts seems never to have dawned upon him. The readiest measure for the discord in the ten topics mentioned above is a statement of the intended Conflict.

Problem.

Condition: A wife is jealous of her husband's love for an unwelcome child.

Cause: Her lover becomes jealous of the child now loved by the wife.

Conclusion: The wife and husband are reconciled.

This is a syllabus of the nearest approach to a sustained Plot. If the author had been able to SEE this nugget buried beneath the mass of dross in his manuscript, he might have made a better issue of it. But alas, this sense of Unity is the last faculty acquired by the amateur. A score of first-class Play ideas lurk in the shadow of this juvenile concept of a dramatic composition. Of all these undeveloped possibilities the plight of the sweet young girl who enters the convent is the most promising. This is ignored as a Plot but fastened on as a disturbing incident.

It is a mystery why such mongrel conglomerations come to Broadway. Financial lessons do not seem to stem the tide of undramatized disaster. There is little profit in an analysis of such inept material. Every item in it is contempt of court and an attempt to follow out the endless instances of violated dramatic law would consume a volume.

THE CONFESSION.

A Triphammer Blow at the Emotions.

No better proof of the elastic susceptibilities of the composite crowd could be offered than its acceptance of this double-strength melodrama. It is true that the religious persuasion indicated by the title tends to invite a denomination whose hearts respond to the specific Catholic Conflict. This fact secures a closer accord in the audience but disqualifies the Play, to a degree, for those of a different creed. An appeal to a class is safe dramatic traffic, however, when its following is so uniformly powerful. It is only where an elective subject limits its auditors to the few that the selected Conflict is impracticable.

“The Confession” is weakest in its murder motive. The Frenchman acquires his cause for the killing outside the presentation of the Play. Plot essentials of such import should not only be introduced in the action, they should be SEEN. For want of this cardinal evidence we are compelled to take the author’s word for it. An author’s assertion unbacked by visual interpretation is never accepted as dramatic fact. Seeing is believing.

As a purely religious enterprise the Play is without a purpose, either for Catholic or Protestant. It cannot save the saved and it cannot convert the converted. To the auditor who rejects the sanctity of the priest’s silence, this conduct constitutes homicide in the first degree. And at the very gate of the gallows sustained silence makes the clergyman a murderer by ecclesiastical law.

The province of this Play is entertainment only. But it does entertain. Once the supposition is swallowed that the priest cannot divulge the text of a confession, even the Protestant submits to the illusion and the feelings are subjected to triphammer blows. The sympathies are drenched by conflicting emotions. No opportunity is lost for stretching out the agony. The improbable is ever present but cleverly concealed by the exaggeration of melodramatic appeal. For the contagion of the crowd is terrific.

THE LITTLEST REBEL.

A Big Drama with a Little Star.

That “The Littlest Rebel” makes the keenest appeal to a fundamental emotion yet staged this season is a matter of mob psychology. As an exponent of the redeeming power of parental instinct it ranks with “Madame X” and “The Music Master.” As an example of the possibilities of a childhood drama it might be classed with “Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm.” Far

in advance of any of these recent successes is its dramatic reiteration of the parental motif from a dozen different standpoints.

This law of the parent and child is manifest in the following manner:

The child's grief at the death of her mother.

The infant attitude of the aged slave toward his master.

The rebel spy risking his life to visit his daughter.

The "Little Rebel" in motherless solitude caring for her dolls.

The federal Colonel touched by her resemblance to his own little daughter.

The child innocently betraying her father to the agents of death.

The child's budging the fixed purpose of General Grant.

A nation making orphans by the cruelties of war.

All of these emotional touches reach the soul of the spectator with involuntary grip. It is here that the Play makes a powerful bid for patronage. The child herself is the most fascinating agency of appeal. Her infant personality haunts the subconscious mind of the auditor long after the Play is forgotten. What more potent medium of publicity could the manager desire?

Unfortunately Mr. Peple has not halted here. Through some oversight or miscalculation, the maternal instinct has not seemed big enough for an evening's entertainment and the absurdities of a court-martial and sham battle are thrown in for full measure. Outside circumstances of no small interest in themselves are hitched on to the Conclusion of the child conflict.

Edward Peple is one of the country's coming playwrights, but the sooner he learns to SEE his subject the better he will be able to define the relation of the parts to the whole and pursue the dramatic process of elimination.

Problem.

1. A spy is betrayed by his motherless daughter.
2. His death would make the child an utter orphan.
3. The captor brings his nation to relent.

This is the only normal syllogism that would harmonize the various strands of Conflict and retain the highest moral taught by all. The time is near at hand when managers will decline a Play that cannot pay its way with a sustained development of ONE complete Plot. Even the commercial power of this principle is highly scientific, when applied to the best definition of modern drama. Concentrate!

The straight and simple course is the easiest to pursue and the only one that will result in double distilled drama. It seems so easy to the untrained mind to go out and gather materials for Plot complications rather than develop them from within.

By Request.

S E V E N D A Y S .

Capital Roughhouse Farce.

Reference has been made to this Play in an earlier number. At the special request of numerous subscribers we analyze more in detail.

“Seven Days” is one of those seven year occurrences of the “Charley’s Aunt” species that wins out of the compelling antics of the Actors as much as by the consistent Cause supporting the frolic as a whole.

Owing to the intermittent attainment of success the pattern is not as safe to follow as the more staple product of legitimate comedy. It can be recommended only to Authors possessing an overflow of this spontaneous spirit of hilarity. It is a form of entertainment so highly artificial that little profit can avail the analysis of dramatic principle involved and violated.

In a general way it might be advised that some slight pretext be ascribed the innumerable exits and entrances, that the Plot be less scattered and the main issue more direct and that sufficient motive be given the characters to account for their behaviour in a more normal and less capricious fashion.

By Request.

S H O R E A C R E S .

Ahead of Its Time.

It is a pleasure to review one of the Plays of the past that so nearly anticipated the great revolution in technical tendencies. Few dramas of the old school would hold their own with modern audiences as does this wonderful piece of craftsmanship.

Armed with an idea the author gets it over the footlights with more emotional appeal and less claptrap than any dramatist of his age save Oscar Wilde. The pull on the sympathies is terrific. Ibsen sounded loftier themes and exploited more advanced philosophy, but not one of his Plays holds a candle to “Shore Acres” for downright grip of the fundamental feelings of American audiences. If Hearne were writing to-day with a technic as far ahead of the times as was the art he employed in the eighties he would have no rival to fear in present day playwrights.

His flaws are few. He even eliminated soliloquy. Lack of clarity in Conflict is the chief fault. But this is a popular affliction with modern structure. His exaggerated character drawing is a remnant of the times. The skill with which the main story is dovetailed into the town lot boom is a Plot building model for all time.

The fact that the father's brother once loved the former's wife should be etched into the foreground of the Play. If the audience knew that he was fighting for the daughter of the woman he once loved we need not rely entirely on talk when the item is introduced to enhance situation in the light house scene. But this, too, was good playwriting in its day. And Herne heads the list of early American dramatists.

PUBLISHED PLAYS.

E M B E R S.*

Five Dramas of Discussion.

Mr. Middleton prepares a symbolic five course feast but invites only such intellectual individuals as are equal to the gastronomic task. The Conflict is purely psychological in each instance and is not translated into the language of the theatre by means of the visual.

To a great extent the events treated have taken place off stage and come to us in the form of a reported occurrence. They do not take place here and now. It is impossible to create composite illusion by this process.

Hearsay is weak and feeble evidence for the audience compared with actual stage happenings which they can drink in with their eyes. The one depends upon voluntary attention of the individual auditor who is required to transpose dialog into thought. The other arrests the involuntary interest of the composite spectator who instantly accepts the pictured thought as illusion.

But Mr. Middleton frankly states "each Play is the epitome of a larger drama which is suggested in the background." This is equivalent to admitting that each is an inspiration in the echo. Ibsen pursued the reverse of this theory. He wrote the larger drama and reflected the lesser one in the past. But the art has advanced since then.

Modern dramatists are demonstrating that it is not necessary to found your Cause in the past nor your Conclusion in the future. The entire Play in these ideal instances begins with the curtain, culminates with the clash of contending forces and ends with the triumph.

*Henry Holt & Co., New York. Price \$1.35.

We recommend "Embers" for the student of Playwriting. It is an unusual offering, crowded with beautiful concepts and crowned by delicate touches of sentiment and character. Every real author who reads the book will conceive innumerable Plot possibilities. The five Playlets are "The Failures," "The Gargoyle," "In His House," "Madonna" and "The Man Masterful."

THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD.*

Confounding Drama with Pastoral Poetry.

Beginning with its cumbrous title nearly every step in the construction of this piece is radically untechnic. The author appears to have little dramatic instinct and in failing to SEE his Conflict he has failed miserably in interpreting it to us. His intentions were as follows:

Problem.

1. A boy wins a girl on the rumor of patricide.
2. She finds that this rumor is false.
3. Her love is disillusioned.

The gravest flaw in this structure is the false premise for affection. We are required to accept the obsolete point of view of an extremely simple and superstitious folk to the effect that a girl would deem it heroic for a boy to defy the law and kill his father. This is the germ of the drama. If a competent dramatist were to attempt such a theme he could hardly get away with it even without the handicap of poetry and over-worked words.

The next serious blunder is a failure to set the Conditions truthfully before the audience. Our Problem calls for the "rumor of patricide." Nothing is confided to the audience that shows this is a rumor. We are gulled into believing it, as are the characters in the Play. The author has not provided for our superior knowledge; the only treatment that spells SUS-PENSE.

On top of these fundamental errors is a distortion of Unity that only the amateur can abide. The legitimate Conflict is seduced into many stray paths.

At first it is a widow who will strive for the hero's hand. Again this dame is bribed by a rival to win the hero away from the heroine. In a third Plot she accepts a bribe to aid the hero in winning another. The fourth is the drunken father's determination to wed his daughter to a rival swain at

*John W. Luce & Co., Boston. Price \$1.00.

once. All these spurious spurts of Plot tend to dilute the main Conflict which is a watery semblance at best. It is hard to teach the beginner that Plot complication must arise from within—not without.

Yeats declares this to be the most original piece of stage literature since Elizabethan times. If this is true, its originality means retrogression not progress. The dramatist who ignores the literary merit of his product will write the truest Plays. Plays want popularity for a time, not eternity. Time will banish the best of them by the technical and mechanical innovation of a decade.

L O V E L Y P E G G Y.*

Four Fragmentary Conflicts.

This is hardly a Play. It is written by Prof. Jack Crawford, of Yale University, who has merely rendered an imitation of the Elizabethan drama. It implies a prior knowledge of theatrical history and therefore restricts its auditors to that selected few. Four fragments of Conflicts paddle about for self preservation but no one of them actually survives.

1. Which actress will Sir Charles patronize, Peg or Bel-lany?
2. Which will obtain Peggy, Sir Charles or Garrick?
3. Which will obtain Garrick, Violette or Peggy?
4. Which will win the audience, Sir Charles or Peggy?

There would be little technical profit in a discussion of the endless errors in these four diverse Conflicts. Charles Frohman is adequate in his advice to young authors to thoroughly exhaust the main Conflict, not to pad out the evening's entertainment by resorting to the old device of sub-plot. In order to demonstrate this application of the law of Unity suppose we construct an hypothesis that would offer the best opportunity for dramatization in this dormant material. Plot number two is probably the likeliest.

Suppose Sir Charles captivates Peg Woffington by the splendor of his wealth and title. Garrick truly loves the girl but she spurns him in his poverty. Inspired by the hope of winning her, Garrick rises rapidly to fame and affluence. At the crisis of this Conflict Garrick is pitted against Sir Charles. He outranks the nobleman on all counts—fame, power, popularity and personality. Peggy is incidentally won in the battle.

*Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn. Price \$1.25.

This synopsis is not offered as a scenario for revision. It illustrates the operation necessary to convert "Lovely Peggy" into a dramatic document. A dominating idea is meanwhile supplied—that personality is ever paramount. And with this hypothesis a far better Play could be built by the same author.

T I T L E S F R O M S H A K E S P E A R E .

Mr. Volney Streamer has done a most interesting work of the quotations from Shakespeare that comprise book and play titles utilized by various authors.

This is a valuable book for the playwright. The art of christening a play is no small element in its salesmanship and financial success. A hint at the Plot should always be conveyed by an adequate title and for the author who finds difficulty in choosing a name, this collection of terse, graphic titles will prove an aid and an inspiration.

Published by Mitchell Kennerley, New York. Price \$1.

A N E W W A Y T O P A Y O L D D E B T S.*

A Four Plot Play.

If Philip Massinger had lived in our day when stage mechanics render scene-painting unnecessary in the dialog, no doubt he would build his Plays as we build them. It may seem a sacrilege to desecrate this masterpiece of antiquity. The decree is not of our rendering. It is the verdict of dramatic evolution.

As a model for students to follow, nothing could be more misleading. As a consummate outrage of every known principle of Play Construction no better example could well be devised. It violates Unity, character and commonsense. It instances every available error to be avoided in modern craftsmanship from its improbable semblance of Conflict down to the preposterous transparency of every syllable uttered. No vestige of motive hides the author's nude purpose. His mechanical levers are always in view.

You ask us to reduce this collection of Plots to a syllogism! Such a feat is impossible. Logic forbids! There is no one Conflict contained in the piece. A nephew has been swindled out of his estate by a greedy old uncle. He contrives to dupe the old man in turn by the false rumor of a wealthy match. What is the answer?

The author attempts to tell us that this crafty old rogue is easily ensnared. He finances the courtship of his nephew in the hope of stinging him a second time! Does this tally with human events? No it is supremely contradictory. The crafty old uncle is duped by the author, not by the Plot.

*Samuel French, New York, Price 15c.

Suspended from this are several spurious Plots and a host of superfluous characters. In a second Conclusion the author seeks to tell us that it is the daughter's social elevation the old man strives for. In a separate and distinct Plot it is the trick of sanctioning her marriage to his enemy that arrests our attention. This belongs in another Play. The trumped-up trick of the deed that originally robbed the nephew, might be turned into a splendid situation if properly dramatized into Plot. As the piece stands, however, it is a hopeless muddle of unsubordinated and unnecessary parts.

WHAT ARISTOTLE ANTICIPATED

In his Rhetoric and Poetics he treats of Drama, Logic, Proposition, Syllogism, Sequence, Conditions Precedent, Plot, Acts, Action, Unity, Talk, Preparation, Compulsion, Character, Dialogue, Episode, Audience, and even the Happy Ending. We will illustrate these points, from time to time.

UNITY

"It is necessary that a Plot which is well constructed should be rather single than TWO-FOLD, (though some say it should be the latter.)

It is requisite that as in other imitative arts one imitation is the imitation of one thing, thus, also in drama. The Plot, since it is an imitation of action should be the imitation of one action, and of the WHOLE of this, and that the parts of the transactions should be so arranged, that any one of them being transposed, or taken away, the whole would become different and changed. For that which when present or not present produces no sensible difference is not a part of the Plot."

—Aristotle, 330 B. C.

*A*NY of the printed Plays in these Volumes may be ordered of W. H. Baker & Co., who carry in stock the books of all publishers.

W. H. Baker & Co.
Publishers
Boston

AMERICAN PLAYGOERS

New York City

Report of Meetings

Playwriting Evening

Hotel Astor Friday Evening, November 17, 1911

At this meeting two playlets were produced by the Playwriting Committee. The first was Henri Lavedan's "The Pearl" representing the obsolete drama of Talk. The second was a revision of "The Pearl" in which the Plot essentials were visualized by means of symbols and events.

A brief outline of each playlet follows:

First Version

A man and wife tell the audience of a servant who was taken ill the day of her employment. They have been very kind to the girl. She is now restored to health and will begin work. She enters dressed for the street. She must leave. The wife is surprised at this apparent ingratitude. The girl finally confesses that she is the accomplice of a thief. Her physician is the thief in disguise. They intended to loot the place. The woman is disappointed in "the pearl" she thought she had found for a servant.

Second Version

We see the thieves actually at work. A pearl is a part of their plunder. When the wife enters the man assumes to be a physician in attendance upon the pseudo-servant girl. The wife pays the doctor and dismisses him. The girl attempts to leave on the excuse that the doctor has prescribed exercise in the open air but through a force of circumstances is caught with the stolen goods. She now confesses the plot to rob the place and proves her gratitude for the hospitality extended by returning "the pearl" to its owner.

Third Version

Suggestions were invited and a lively discussion ensued. The points brought out in this discussion together with written revisions submitted by professional and amateur dramatists in the club, have been incorporated in a third version of the playlet which is given herewith in full.

THE PEARL

Characters { Wife
 { Jimmy
 { Clara

SCENE: A sick room. Time: Evening.

At rise, Clara is reclining in invalid's chair. Medicines, and other sick-room accessories in evidence. Wife is administering a teaspoonful of liquid to Clara.

WIFE.—I'm so glad you're improving, my dear.

CLARA.—It's all due to your kindness, madam.

WIFE.—Oh, my child, it has been a real pleasure to care for you.

CLARA.—Most ladies would have sent me.....

WIFE.—Oh, no, no, no, the common servant, perhaps, but not you, Clara.

CLARA.—I've never known a person like you. You've been a regular mother to me.

WIFE.—And you've appreciated it.

CLARA.—But I don't deserve it.

WIFE.—There, there, we won't talk about that. I know you'll be the best maid I ever had.

CLARA.—The doctor is coming this evening.

WIFE.—Yes, what will he say when he sees you sitting up?

CLARA.—He will know it is all your kindness.

WIFE.—(Bell rings) There he is now. (Exit wife).

(Clara hurriedly begins dressing; abandons feigned illness)

JIMMY.—(Enters, dressed as a Physician. Speaks in suppressed voice) Hello kid! Are you ready?

CLARA.—Oh, yes....I suppose so.....

JIMMY.—Suppose?

CLARA.—What excuse will you give for my leaving?

JIMMY.—Excuse?

CLARA.—Yes, she expects me to start work.

JIMMY.—Now that I cured you, eh? (Laughs).

CLARA.—But how will I get away?

JIMMY.—Leave that to me. I'll prescribe a little fresh air.

See!

CLARA.—She's been so kind to me!

JIMMY.—Look here, kid, are you gettin' cold feet. Get on the job!

CLARA.—Oh, I can't do it, Jimmy.

JIMMY.—None of that! Where's the junk?

CLARA.—(Sighs, reluctantly) In that room—the top bureau drawer—a leather box.

JIMMY.—(Produces tools) Good! Now you watch that door!

(Exit Jimmy, stealthily. Clara opens grip. Jimmy returns, places box in it. Showing pearl brooch) How's that?

CLARA.—(Takes pearl) Oh, that's her favorite pearl.

JIMMY.—The best of friends must part.

CLARA.—Oh, I can't bear to take that. Let me put it back! Please!

JIMMY.—No!

CLARA.—I must!

JIMMY.—Say! Cut that, now. You fall down on this job and I'll fix you! Do you hear?

(Noise of approach. Jimmy covers grip with Clara's coat)

(Sh! Sink it. She's coming! Keep up the bluff.

(Clara assumes attitude of patient....Jimmy feeling her pulse)

(Enter wife)

WIFE—Our patient is recovering rapidly, doctor.

JIMMY.—Yes....yes, thank you.

WIFE.—Why I declare I can see a change for the better since I left her, a moment ago.

JIMMY.—Oh, she's doing wonderfully, wonderfully.

WIFE.—(Gives him money) We are grateful to you, doctor, for bringing her around so promptly.

JIMMY.—Thank you. You won't need my services any longer, I presume.

WIFE.—That is for you to say. What is your advice about work, doctor? Would it be wise for her.....?

JIMMY.—Oh, she can begin any time, now.

WIFE.—I shant let her exert herself.

JIMMY.—I can believe that. Good evening, ladies. Good evening! Don't forget, Miss, a little exercise in the open air. (Jimmy exits, followed by wife, showing him out. Clara makes hasty preparation for street. Conceals pearl in her bosom. Is pinning on hat when wife returns).

WIFE.—Why, Clara, where are you going?

CLARA.—Why....to....to get a little fresh air.

Wife—At night....are you sure the doctor would approve....?

CLARA.—You....you heard him prescribe it....(Slyly reaches for her grip).

WIFE.—Your grip! (Puts her hand on grip).

CLARA.—(Nervously) Don't!

WIFE.—Don't what?

CLARA.—(Takes hold of grip) Give it to me!

WIFE.—Clara, you've packed your things, you're going to leave?

CLARA.—I am sorry, madam,.....I must.

WIFE.—Why, Clara, after all we have done for you.

CLARA.—I appreciate that, Madam.

WIFE.—This is an odd way you have of showing it.

CLARA.—Madam has been exceedingly kind, I know.

WIFE.—Then why do you wish to leave?

CLARA.—I'm sorry, madam. I hate to inconvenience you
—but—but—

WIFE.—But what?

CLARA.—I'm compelled to. I cannot stay!

WIFE.—I begin to see, you've imposed on me. You never
intended to work. You've taken advantage of my hospitality
and now that you are cured.....

CLARA.—Oh, no, Madam, I am not an ingrate. Don't
think that.

WIFE.—Then why are you leaving?

CLARA.—It is absolutely necessary, I tell you.

WIFE.—Why did you ever enter this house, tell me that?

CLARA.—I'd like to explain.....but.....oh, no, you
wouldn't understand.

WIFE.—I understand one thing, you are no servant.

CLARA.—No, madam, I am not.

WIFE.—I thought not. You're above that.

CLARA.—I must be going Madam, really.

WIFE.—No! Clara first tell me why you came here! I
have been your friend, haven't I?

CLARA.—(Breaks down, crying) Oh, I'm sorry I ever
came!

WIFE.—How can you say that?

CLARA.—Because, I am not what you think me!

WIFE.—Then tell me, Clara.....

CLARA.—(Opens grip revealing plunder) There! There!
Now you know! (sobbing)

WIFE.—My jewel case!

CLARA.—Sh! Not so loud.

WIFE.—My girl, my girl! You came here and deliberately
plotted to rob me!

CLARA.—No, No, I didn't.....

WIFE.—Who then?

CLARA.—It was.....Jimmy.

WIFE.—Jimmy?

CLARA.—Yes, the Physician.

WIFE.—I do not believe you.

CLARA.—It's the truth.

WIFE.—Then he is a thief!

CLARA.—Yes, he's no doctor.

WIFE.—And you?

CLARA.—I am merely his associate.

WIFE.—And you were not ill?

CLARA.—No.

WIFE.—Oh, Clara, I can't believe you would do such a thing! You seemed such a genuine girl....I called you my jewel.

CLARA.—(Clutches her bosom) Your jewel?

WIFE.—Oh, what a fool I've been.

CLARA.—No, Madam, don't say that.

WIFE.—I thought I had found such a pearl.

CLARA.—Perhaps you will find one.

(Takes pearl from her bosom unseen by wife)

WIFE.—What do you mean by that?

CLARA.—You've been exceedingly kind to me. I am not ungrateful. I don't want you to think ill of me. Good bye!

(Clara tosses pearl in her lap and abruptly exits, sobbing)

WIFE.—My pearl!

THE END.

Fourth Version.

The sketch still lacks a development of the dominating idea. The purpose of the author was to demonstrate that spark of gratitude kindled in the soul by disinterested kindness. He wished to show that this is true even of a thief. This purpose is not successfully pronounced in any of the three versions given above. Further suggestions are asked for. These will be dramatized into the present manuscript and produced before the "Playgoers" at a later meeting.

Address, Luther B. Anthony, Chairman of the Playwriting Committee, care of "The Dramatist," Easton, Pa.

SPREAD the gospel of Technology!
If you have friends who are battling blindly with obstacles of this craft, ask us to send them a specimen copy.

The Dramatist,
Easton, Pa.

The DRAMATIST

LUTHER B. ANTHONY, Editor

Vol. III.

EASTON, PA.

No. 3

QUARTERLY

1912

APRIL

Enduring Success

Revolution in all Avenues of Trade.

The revolution that is modifying methods in every avenue of commerce and finance has not yet reached the stronghold of the average Theatrical Manager. In his endeavor to secure the patronage of a body of customers whose intelligence is rapidly rising he has advanced his forces of efficiency on but one side—the fight for publicity.

In nearly every other line of trade the old methods of winning patronage are taboo. In the modern battle for business supremacy the man who sells for the sake of selling or advertises merely to collect a crowd; soon goes down to enduring defeat. There is a higher principle that governs business-getting nowadays. It is the idea of a SERVICE rendered in exchange for profit gained. It is just possible that the stage is the last division of industry to adopt or recognize this higher law of economic supply and demand. Let us examine into this question.

In the salesmanship of drama the first mark of Service is good entertainment. We like to think that the people as a whole demand a Play with a purpose, with a dominating idea; but this is not yet the universal standard. It may be the next step in audience-evolution. But purpose-drama is like the matter of taste in dress. Some possess it. The bulk of the "tasty" clothes that are bought are a hoax. For even the sale of a hat is less a matter of use than emotion. The style is the buyer's governing theme.

In the mad race with frenzied competition the manager devotes much thought to the plea for publicity. He intuitively selects the Play that promises this feature rather than the one which supplies the intrinsic demand (and thereby renders a Service) the Play with good entertainment. That there is no enduring success in this notoriety-mongering has been well demonstrated in the present disastrous year. For not only is it impossible to maintain the publicity product, playgoing confidence is so wrecked by the attempt that really good Plays suffer for the sins of their sensational sisters.

The stage must fall in line with the march of commercial methods. Its slogan, too, must be SERVICE and satisfaction for enduring success.

THE SERVANT IN THE HOUSE.*

Gospel Engraved on the Naked Soul.

The deftness with which this author has shown the laws of God in the ways of man establishes him as one of the consummate masters of his craft. In attempting to analyze this masterpiece, the subconscious mind of the critic cries: "Hands off! You are tampering with the work of the Infinite." With the ennobling impression of its theme fresh upon him the technologist hesitates to ply his probe.

Three situations arise in this Play that challenge the virile moments in stage history. They are as tender in treatment as they are telling in effect. We refer to the three moments of emotional magnitude where the tie of the father and daughter tug alternately at our heartstrings.

The first instance is the girl's ardent desire to find her own father. She invites the uncouth drainman to join her wishing party. "I want my father," wails the child, and all the while WE KNOW that this grimy old scavenger is her rightful parent whom the uncle is concealing from her. "I want my little kid," is the father's earnest prayer.

The child builds an exalted image of her missing sire and the poor drainman hurts her by hinting that he might not be as ideal as she fancies. "Don't take away my little dream," she pleads. And with a lump rising in his throat (and in ours) he reluctantly yields: "All right, I won't."

The third instance is the final revelation that the grimy old ditch digger is her father. As he emerges from the filthy drain, drenched with the muck and reeking with the foulest stench, he becomes the embodiment of her high ideals because he possesses the moral courage to rid the church of a poisonous drain. The daughter rushes to his arms and cries: "You are my father..... You are my wish come true!" For he is the very emblem of righteousness her pious uncle has taught her to revere.

Here we have a delightful satire on the hollow efforts of a superficial class of clergyman who decline to dig beneath the tenets of the church. It is a sermon played in human Conflict. The author does not soar above our heads into the realm of vague psychology. He casts his theme in the mold of our emotions and finds his best scenes upon our racial traits. At the font of parental affection he saturates our spirit with a flood of brotherly love.

*Harper & Bro. Price \$1.25.

Problem.

1. A child is separated from her humble father by a priest.
2. The father's moral courage puts the priest to shame.
3. The child is allowed to return to her own father.

This is the structural basis of the Play. In this operation of the parental law lies all the emotional appeal. It is true this Problem takes no account of the Christ idea but that is no element in the real Plot. "Manson" is the author's spiritual symbol. To make him a factor in the Conflict it would be necessary to assign him an active office in the contention. As it is he is actuated by no motive other than the divine will. And this quantity cannot be cast in human character.

What then is the purpose of this superhuman being whose identity is never made quite clear in the Plot? He is the publicity feature of the Play. For while the parental element is the power that moves the audience, the Christ idea is the thing draws them there. What other character in Christendom is so well advertised. "Manson's" resemblance to the Messiah is not to be mistaken. The masquerade as a servant is but a filmy veil. The gown, the make-up and even the mystery about his person serve the one purpose of Christ on the stage.

But apart from this diversion, which is deliberate, of course, examples of positive playwriting principle are manifold. The infinite care with which minute possibilities are nursed into vigorous dramatic life is characteristic of Mr. Kennedy's lofty ideal of workmanship. His soul is so saturated with the spirit of divinity that his art necessarily partakes of this sacrament. As a dramatist he ranks first as an interpreter of the gospel in dramatic form.

T H E T E R R I B L E M E E K . *

The Author Dictates and his Auditors Create.

Select an audience of mental temperaments, surfeited with seasons of incessant playgoing and how will you entertain them? This is the problem that confronts Charles Rann Kennedy in his effort to fit a Play to "Little Theatre" patrons and here is his solution.

First of all he blindfolds his audience by plunging the theatre into utter darkness. He then provides a Lenten thesis out of which they may construct a Play by relating a fable in the every-day speech of our time. Under the author's guiding supervision we are compelled to build in the life of today a tragedy that transformed the history of the world.

*Harper & Bro. Price \$1.00.

Taking the story of the cross for a text the dramatist draws upon our memory, imagination, reasoning and insight till his words uttered by unseen puppets suggest his auditors into an individual construction of the greatest drama in history—the crucifixion. At the end our mental spectacle is corroborated by a final tableau on the stage.

This is an entirely new species in the evolution of dramaturgy. The author dictates while his auditors create. They form the new concept by a combination of their own images. From theological information previously acquired each individual brings his play to the theatre to reconstruct it on the author's secret plan. This plan involves a culminating moral which the dramatist applies:

"A newer courage, more like woman's. Dealing with life, not death. It changes everything."

Of course this treatment opposes the principles of Play Construction. This need neither debar Mr. Kennedy nor dramatic law. Drama is for the democratic masses. "The Terrible Meek" is for the intellectual few. It was designed for them. Its capacity to please these sophisticated first-nighters can best be cited by the words of Burns Mantle, an estimable critic:

"Not a single handclap broke the spell. When the lights were turned up, the audience calmly and quietly walked out of the theatre. In many respects it was the strongest exhibition I ever had witnessed in a theatre. And should I live to grow haltingly, tiresomely reminiscent I never shall forget the sight of that sophisticated New York audience hurrying quietly, soberly up the aisles, half of them with heads bowed as though ashamed of this show of emotional susceptibility, the other half eager to get past the exits and back into the atmosphere of the streets and the town."

THE MARIONETTES.

A Chart for Nazimova's Acting.

That a Play may be less a Play and still offer superior opportunity to the star performing the principal part may sound like a paradox. This is true, however, of Nazimova in this peculiar importation called "The Marionettes." What the conflict has provided in the way of character creation is very little. What the actress has infused is very much.

But is this isolated essence of histrionic art the thing we most of us go to see? I claim it is not. At least, in the theatre. We may thoroughly enjoy the entertainer who does a monologue, but the Play implies a representation of a contention between human beings. Out of this Conflict the personality of the character is spun. And this spinning is our cherished illusion.

"The Marionettes" is nothing more than a chronicle of domestic affairs, most of which, to the American playgoer are highly artificial.

1. A man of the world marries a demure little creature for her money.
2. She attracts the serious attentions of another man.
3. The husband is piqued into loving her.

This is the dramatic depth of the piece. In itself it creates no illusion. We do not see the wife evolve from mouse to coquette for there is no Conflict to evolve her. Nazimova, on the other hand, weaves a vision of impersonation wholly independent of the Play or playwright. By the rare subtlety of her craft she compels the stage existence of this artless little witch.

Naturally, the actress who can create an illusion of character reality without a shadow of dramatic fabric to sustain her, is the greater artist. But the production of which she is a part is not a greater Play. Player and Playwright must labor hand in hand to paint the dramatic picture. Absence of the one renders the other mere mimicry. The Play is the product of both and the fellow who said "The PLAY'S the thing" understood his business.

E L E V A T I N G A H U S B A N D .

Four Play Problems Struggle for Supremacy.

Problem No. 1.

1. A refined girl marries a self-made man.
2. She cannot elevate him to her standards.
3. He goes away and obtains a polish.

Problem No. 2.

1. A wife cannot polish her plebeian mother-in-law.
2. She leaves the husband on latter's account.
3. The mother surrenders for her son's sake.

Problem No. 3.

1. A husband employs his rival as manager.
2. The rival wrecks his master's fortune.
3. The wife renounces the rival.

Problem No. 4.

1. The wife loans money to her former suitor.
2. The husband suspects her fidelity.
3. She condemns the worthless lover.

This Play is really not as hashed-up as these immature syllogisms might indicate. None of these Problems are completely carried out. The second one is barely suggested. But each tendency toward separate entity means dissolution of the first which is the valid core of the Conflict. As indicated by the third clause of this Problem the "elevating" takes place off stage where the husband sojourns to the farm for a siege of cultivation.

The third Problem is the conventional melodrama, sandwiched in for full measure. It retards the legitimate Play of which it forms no tributary part, and in itself is so fabulous that it obtains no vestige of illusion. Problem number four is a distracted offshoot of the moment, false in its intent and detrimental to the main thread of interest.

The original Play has possibilities galore if the main trial were followed and the opportunities dramatized. The process of "elevating" could be made one of the ludicrous hits of the Plot if it were accomplished on the stage and the spurious Problems eliminated. It is difficult to SEE the main path in such a maze of windings but the straight and narrow course is the only one that will safely reach the author's destination. Diversity of purpose may provide a broader range for the versatile artistry of Mr. Louis Mann, but rigid concentration is the only treatment that can produce big dramatic value.

The play just barely misses the mark. These various Problems only obtrude in spots. The clever "business" and detail employed throughout the production tend to hold interest in spite of structural infirmities. The main character of the "husband" is intensely real at instances where the character-creating Conflict is convincing.

S U M U R U N .

Meaningless as Well as Wordless.

By far the most pronounced novelty in "Sumurun" is its utter dissimilarity to anything heretofore disguised as a play. In fact it has so well succeeded in this particular that it escapes the classification of drama entirely. We can well imagine a wordless Play, but it would have to be about something coherent to the eye. It would be a task beyond the interpretation of any unaided imagination on earth to glean a connected story from the optical appreciation of this piece. It is even less explanatory than the general run of Plays would be minus the auditory factor. And even with a spoken prologue and a handbook of thousands of words to the rescue, there results no satisfactory interpretation of the thing. It is a comic opera without meaning or merriment—an Oriental fable without sustained interest.

Starting with a name unknown in dictionaries, it is a wordless Play merely because words cannot be summoned to describe its dissimilarity to anything worth while in dramaturgy. Readers of this journal know that an experiment in a wordless Play would be hailed as a boon to students. In fact this phase of construction has been a continual hobby in these columns. It is the highest test of live dramatic materials. The announcement of "Sumurun" promised this visual treat but its production falls short on many counts. And the first of these is that it is not a Play—not even possessed of the material for one.

In the first place, if the fable could be understood by the average spectator its Plot would fail either to interest or amuse in any clean or wholesome sense. The pantomimed exhibition is not coherent, however, but requires translation to the American point of view. The antics of the mimes convey no meaning to the audience. Their pantomime not only fails of interpretation but it serves to obscure itself of the super exaggeration of wordless effort and incongruity of triple Plot.

The piece fails to convey a connected idea of anything. In spots where it is intelligible it goes to the opposite extreme of lascivious and carnal suggestion. It is a pamphlet of self indulgence and dissipation of the most destructive kind with no single redeeming trait.

What then is the secret of its momentary success—a curio of weird stage pictures of the harem, with its concubines, eunuchs, slaves and buffoons? Proclaimed as a top notch of art these clowns in their bungling. Bagdad trimmings escape police inspection. Undisguised as superior craftsmanship, such lechery would hardly get past the health official.

That a wordless play could be built we have prevailing proofs, on all sides. Let the competent actors or any photo-play produce their camera pantomime before the audience and we would have a wordless Play infinitely better than "Sumurun." On the screen this German importation would drive the audience to the ticket booth for money back. In the theatre it can survive as a passing fad at best. The fact that its scenery represents a novel style of German poster art is hardly an adequate excuse for American importation.

G R E E N S T O C K I N G S.

The Classic Comedy of the Season.

No better evidence of the shattered condition of playgoing confidence can be offered than the impossibility of publicizing this rare example of classic comedy. Thousands of theatre-goers actually want this quality of Play, but there is no means of convincing them. The Play with a sensational "news

value" starts the public press in motion and the normal product is blighted by contrast. Both branches lose, for the public faith is undermined. The rank and file of theatre patrons feel this uncertainty and prefer to apply their box office allowance to the deficit made by the high cost of living.

Few Comedies in the past and certainly none of the present season display the intricate operations of dramatic law put forth in the second act of "Green Stockings." It seems incredible to think the same author guilty of that other nondescript "The Witness for the Defense." A. E. W. Mason did them both and the strangest part of all, this author is by rights, a novelist.

The fable of the Play, is the simplest yarn like the thread of all high comedies. A girl pretends to have a sweetheart and the fictitious fiance turns up at an inopportune moment. It is the dexterity with which the author discloses his incarnation to the audience and unfolds this miracle to the girl herself, that utterly fascinates. The managers have made two ineffectual attempts to let the playgoers know that such a treat is available. It seems to be an impossible feat in the momentary panic of New York press agencies.

THE TRAIL OF THE LONESOME PINE.

With Many Forks and Crossroads.

No playwright on earth could reduce the cumbersome story of this book to a concrete Play Problem. It is no trail at all. It is a lane with a thousand windings. To preserve these characteristic values of the book is the first purpose of the novelist for it is in them that he plans to profit in staging his work for his myriad of readers.

Eugene Walter has demonstrated the magnitude and impropriety of this task. From previous specimens of his art we are convinced that he knows a Play when he sees one. It is the false conditions imposed by the novel that bind him hand and foot. Without these tangled tales of dramatic disunity his book-built audience would be dissatisfied. To incorporate them means dramatic suicide.

"The Trail of the Lonesome Pine," therefore, is not a Play, it is what the average book would look like stretched out in spoken words plus a few really dramatic situations. But since these situations are founded on recited facts they partake of the fictitious to a marked degree.

The futility of elaborate scenic effect in a realistic drama is well illustrated by this spectacular effort. Attention is not concentrated, thereby, it is distracted. The artificialities of a miniature mountain path with an amateur horse ascending it is not calculated to lend interest to the fable. The thump of

the old nag's hoofs on the hollow lumber hill successfully dispels the illusion. Our suspense is misdirected to the rider's peril. This artifice does not gain adequate atmosphere for the Play.

Isn't it evident, then, that transposition requires greater skill than playwriting? Isn't it true that a successful dramatization of a novel is impossible? Mr. Galsworthy supports this theory as applied to his own books. Once in a great while there is an exception like "Brewster's Millions" where dramatization is made possible by the dramatic quality of the text.

D I S R A E L I.*

A Play of Factional Appeal.

Any Play that takes the lead in the endurance run of the season demands serious consideration even though its technical essentials be wholly ignored. Two strong factors in this product strive for popularity: racial pride and historical personage. The first appeals to the Hebrew populace, the second enlists the endorsement of educational authorities. Both bring their throngs to the theatre to witness this well played part. Disraeli was a great character in history. He is the greatest Jew in English annals.

Apart from these two commercial ingredients the piece contains little or no theatrical worth. There is no dominating theme or purpose. On its bare dramatic effectiveness it would never make good. The Plot creaks with crude mechanics. The situations and absurdities fairly shriek "Amateur! Amateur!"

Two fragments of Conflict flounder about for preservation. Neither effectually floats: A regeneration idea of developing character in a stupid young nobleman and a prime minister's plunge into high finance of international dimensions. The nearest approach to a Play Problem in this confusion is the following:

Problem.

1. A statesman buys a canal on a bankrupt's note.
2. He forces a banker to honor this worthless paper.
3. The nation extols his cunning.

The foregoing is not the stuff good Plays are made of. The author endeavors to patch it out with a third episode that concerns a female spy. The lesson to be learned is: Go not and do likewise. In the first place there are few Disraelis. In the second place it is the rarest possibility that an actor may be found to fit the part so closely. And last but not least, the

*John Lane Company. Price \$1.00.

Jewish people will soon learn to resent this speculation in a dramatization of their tribal pride so baldly capitalized in Plays like "The Melting Pot," "As a Man Thinks," and "Disraeli."

K I N D L I N G.

A Protest Against Tenement Maternity.

Problem.

1. A wife steals to provide a home for her offspring.
2. The theft discloses her secret of approaching maternity.
3. The inaudible voice of her unborn child secures the home.

Here we have a novel phase of the third law of Nature. A principal in the Plot is a child not yet ushered into existence. The deftness with which this delicate problem is visualized shows the restraint of a master hand. The veteran playwright would balk at the problem of dramatizing prenatal biography. It remains for the youngest American dramatist to treat this difficult subject with adroit delicacy. And Mr. Kenyon is a dramatist, since he has allied dominant purpose with emotional appeal. He drives home his message by way of the sympathies. He has something to say but instead of telling it deals in dramatic pictures that speak the universal language of the soul. He preaches by photograph, not parable. Such words as are used have no brilliance nor distinction, but for the most part his diction is dramatic by virtue of the mere absence of superfluous words. The unheard protest of the coming generation is the loudest voice in the Play.

The greatest moments of "Kindling" are portrayed in this sign language. When we learn the sacred facts of expectant motherhood we come into possession of them without words, without a needless desecration of the young wife's privacy. A little wreck of a cradle tells the tale; a thing she has rescued from the ash heap and treasured as a hiding place for the coming baby's belongings. Students of dramaturgy, mark well this master stroke! It is the quintessence of technic!

Many such examples of craftsmanship might be pointed out where the author compels his audience to construct the advancing Plot without oral specifications. After the little mother has stolen money for a western trip and persuaded her husband she has borrowed it, she hands him the hundred dollars to purchase transportation with. But it is not an even hundred! It is \$113! The exact sum a diamond brooch was pawned for! Here, again, is an instance of real dramatic structure.

Again the symbol language is used with telling effect when the wife is caught with the stolen goods. She has been falsely accused of theft for mere theft's sake. We know she is innocent. We saw the professional crook "plant" the silver in her rooms and the impending doom of discovery hovers about us ready to crack at a moment's alarm. Some baby trinkets are found on the premises. These heap evidence on our poor little heroine's head. She did steal them, but we know the reason why. We know the secret of her approaching maternity and understand these whims and vagaries that accompany that state. The theft is cleverly converted to the disclosure of this Plot fact.

To be sure the Play has instances of faulty treatment. The last act lapses into idle moralizing without the fibre of valid motive to sustain it. Even the detective turns preacher at a signal from the author's pen. The secondary love affair of the settlement worker and the slum physician creates interest in itself but subtracts from the main Plot which it impedes.

Taken all in all "Kindling" is one of the structural strides of the present season. It is a climb in American Craftsmanship. Miss Illington and Mr. Bowes are to be congratulated in the choice of such a vehicle and in the courage to persevere until its production meets success. New York may be too sophisticated for this protest from posterity. Chicago seems to offer this infant a better nursery. Success in art and success in salesmanship do not always travel hand in glove. Despite the game of publicity, however, this Play is a pronounced success. It voices a current craving for the hills and fields, for fresh and fragrant foliage. It presents this timely theme in a way that grips and entertains. It is the call of the race resounding in the lusty cry of the unborn babe!

THE UNEQUAL TRIANGLE.

A Dialogued Monologue.

Van Tassel Sutphen has written a clever sketch for the February "Smart Set Magazine." A woman, an invisible guest and the voice in a phonograph comprise the three characters in his cast. This is not only an ingenious device, it is evidence of a fertile dramatic imagination. It is another contribution to the season's sightless and wordless Plays.

All such innovations are sure stepping stones to the sound principles of Play Construction. They perform a definite service to the art of demonstrating the futility of mere dialog and the vitality of sheer view.

In this particular instance, the remarkable items of visualization are two: the absent character pictured in the matrix of the speaker's lines and the artificial person represented in

the utterances of the phonograph. Both clever expedients accomplish Plot purposes with about as much credulity as the prescribed conditions will permit. The skit is well worth the reading of every earnest student and cannot help suggesting a dozen solutions for stubborn plot puzzles.

A PLAY IN THE PULPIT.

A New Agency for Uniting Drama and Church.

A five-act Play in the sacred altar of a church, attended by clergymen, congregation and sisters of mercy—this would indeed sound like sacrilege! No church would permit it, you will say. It was recently my pleasure, however, to witness this singular event though the performance was conducted throughout by a solitary woman.

The church is ever ready to extend its influence to the stage, but this is the first instance, to my knowledge, where the stage has spread its gospel in the church. The Play was "The Servant in the House," and the ecclesiastical audience took to the text most kindly. The nuns smiled, the congregation laughed and cried, and the Thespian muse reigned gracefully in the sanctuary. Finally as the illusion caught the emotions of the spectators, they forgot their consecrated environment and gave vent to their appreciation in genuine playhouse applause.

This was a high tribute to the excellence of Madame Labadie's artistry. Her quiet charm and dignity adjusted the obvious incongruity of an actress at the altar. She made the Play as sacred as the sermon and many times more real. For she brought the forces of dramatic conflict to her aid. Both church and stage owe such an able interpreter a debt of gratitude. She will do more to ally the platforms of playhouse and pulpit than all the pamphlets in print.

LADY PATRICIA.*

A Travesty on Marital Fidelity.

How can any author hope to win the respect of a sane audience for a group of imbeciles whose conduct bears no similarity to the rational behavior of everyday life? A Play thrives upon depicted situations that might occur to any of us. The transactions in this piece could not overtake us unless we were of the same lax propensity these puppets purport to be. And most of us do not like even to imagine such inanities of ourselves!

*Duffield & Co., New York. Price \$1.00.

Problem.

1. Husband and wife have affinities.
2. These soulmates become mutually attached.
3. The couple are reconciled by desertion.

These characters are all abnormal types and therefore inconsequent to the average spectator. The Play has no communication for the soul. It may admit a hundred mental interpretations for as many different minds but no uniform meaning for the composite imagination of a crowd. And this is the province of drama. Poems and essays may have various possible interpretations and still serve some individual purpose. The very nature of drama is democratic and a Play should mold the multitude of minds into a common Conclusion.

The most that can be said of the ultimate achievement of "Lady Patricia" is that she glorifies marital infidelity of affection. The mechanical comedy and parallel lines of coincident merely serve as adjuncts to this end. They throw the spotlight on conjugal frivolity and in no sense deplore its vice. What possible service can an evening's concentration on this banality perform?

Moral: The flirtations of married people are perfectly harmless.

T H E R A I N B O W .

Analyzed on the Road.

This Play is a peculiar combination of three Plots—one played, one talked and a third merely hinted.

Plot No. 1 Played.

1. A daughter has been separated from her father.
2. His evil companions terminate their happy reunion.
3. He renounces all for her.

Plot No. 2 Talked.

1. A woman's income is the secret bounty of her divorced husband.
2. She discovers this magnanimity.
3. They are reconciled.

Plot No. 3 Hinted.

1. A husband is divorced for his evil associates.
2. His daughter is entrapped by one of these.
3. Through mutual alarm the parents are reconciled.

Plot number one is by far the most dramatic of the three. It is in this fragment that Mr. Henry Miller has his magnificent opportunity of playing that parental note so many of the biggest Plays in history have sounded. In this instance it is the father's separation from the daughter he loves. She must be spared the terrible tidings, but we, in the audience, know.

Plot number two is an entirely spurious story as it now stands. It is TALKED into the first Plot in order to afford an extraneous ending to dramatized portions of the Play. It has nothing whatever to do with the excellent materials of Plot number one, though it could be merged if the circumstances of the wife's income were worked into the fabric. These are recited by characters who have no other motive than the author's mechanical emergency.

Plot number three starts off with an episode that opens the first Act wherein we find one of the husband's friends has shamefully pursued a girl who wishes to do the right thing. This episode is foreign to both other Plots and serves no temporary purpose, even. It could be eliminated bodily without marring the interpretation of the Play in the least. On the other hand it could be availed in the third Plot if the same rogue were to finally attract the cherished daughter of the pair and thus enlist their joint solicitude for their sacred charge.

Of course it is not fair to criticize a Play that is still in the process of building. We are not doing this. Our analysis applies to the present worth of the Play as it appeared upon its fourth performance. Changes are continually being made, no doubt, and we trust many of the above contradictions may be eliminated.

The lowering of the curtain in Act I can be readily disposed of. The European excursion of the entire family in Act III is as false as it is fruitless. The father may fight his battles right here at home. He need not go to war in Costa Rica to become a martyr. His battle should take place before our eyes that we may be convinced of his change of heart and his approaching fitness for fatherhood.

A composite of Plots one and two is the best revision we can suggest and these can be merged into a single-centered Plot presenting all the Conflict Conditions to the eye of the spectator. We should not HEAR one essential and SEE another. This renders conviction uneven, just as in the present form of the Play we SEE the Good Samaritan at the start and refuse to believe ill of him from mere hearsay afterward. All of the evidence that counts in the case should be brought before the court that the dramatic verdict may be unanimous.

This analysis was made from a preliminary try-out in Easton. The episode that opened the first act was eliminated before the play reached New York, in compliance with our criticism.

THE FATTED CALF.

Solicits Sympathy for Insane Heroine.

In an argument with the editor Mr. Hopkins contended that his Play is five years ahead of the times. He declares that American taste has not reached that German standard wherein dramatic interest is not dependent upon sympathetic interest.

Can you agree with him? Do you believe that the time has come in any country, or that it will ever come, when purely intellectual interest can hold an audience? We do not. This is the antithesis of dramatic entertainment. The appeal is democratic, always, and deals with our feelings, not our intellects. We therefore disagree with Mr. Hopkins in the diagnosis of his fate and will proceed to illustrate that it is this very element he scorns which defeats him. It is this feature of arrested sympathy that kills "The Fatted Calf."

Our compassion is solicited for an insane heroine whom the author selects as a wife for a normal lover. He proceeds to cure this ailment by a treatment of hypnotism. As a crowd we do not believe that there is any permanent cure for this malady. The mere suggestion of the taint devitalizes that fervent sympathy we should have for the main character of the Plot. Our interest flags from the first and cannot be revived by any possible theory of a psychological remedy. The very basis of sympathy has been undermined.

The possibilities of this piece lie in its clever ridicule of the over-indulgence of fond parents. The author would do well to confine his Conflict to this satire. This and the pathological clinic do not blend or harmonize. It is a slender fragment of sincere purpose submerged in a sea of farce. In this sense the Play is a paradox. It defeats the very purpose it sets out to attain. It laughs at its own endeavor. The native denouement turns the tables on the perpetrators and makes them victims of their own perverted pessimism. Confined to this farcical effect "The Fatted Calf" might have rivalled that lusty heifer of "Mother Goose" fame. The "moon" of the present season is a hard one to hurdle.

THREE BOOKS FOR PLAYBUILDERS.

Moses, Pollock and Ibsen.

Three books that may enhance the value of any playwright's workshop are "The American Dramatist"¹ by Montrose J. Moses, "Footlights Fore and Aft"² by Channing Pollock, and "From Ibsen's Workshop"³ a collection of Ibsen's notes, plots, scenarios and manuscripts.

"The American Dramatist"¹ contains many helpful hints for the young writer. It can be recommended as one of the best guides extant in the matter of selecting theme and material for a Play. What the American audience demands, says Mr. Moses is a square deal. The large heart rather than the subtle one, the direct deed rather than the elusive thought, and the terse answer rather than the veiled meaning." Read Mr. Moses' book. It is a sincere contribution to the subject.

"Footlights Fore and Aft"² introduces the tyro to the mysteries of the stage, the box office and the royalty ledger. It is the experience of one of our keenest American critics who has substantiated his double right to that title by practical demonstrations of successful play composition. "'What a lucky fellow, we say occasionally of some new author who springs into notice. 'His first Play and a huge success!' But every professional reader in town could tell you that this success wasn't his first play.'" In this chatty vein Mr. Pollock turns out a great many truths that may amuse and interest the student.

"From Ibsen's Workshop"³ requires little comment. The fact that it contains the actual notes set down by the indomitable master who has done more than any one dramatist to remodel the art of present-day-playwriting, sufficiently endorses this valuable book. The translations are excellent and the publishers incur our lasting gratitude for making this work available in our language. The study of his progressive steps of structure is a liberal education in itself.

¹Little Brown and Company. \$2.50.

²Richard K. Badger. \$1.50.

³Scribner's. \$1.25.

THE PEARL.

Fourth Version.

In the January issue a fourth version of "The Pearl" was asked for and many revisions were forwarded. None of these have been found sufficiently strong in the climatic moment which is the specific thing wanted. Some excellent scenes are among these contributions and one entirely new situation is suggested. We will print the latter as it came in and ask for a truer dramatization of the thought contained.

(To Jimmie)

Wife.

Ah! But you came to me in a time of need! I shall never forget it. Clara had come to answer my advertisement. I had been asking her a few questions when suddenly she said to me: 'Ah madame, I feel so faint' and turned as white as a sheet. I was distracted. I placed her on the sofa. My heart went out

to her. But I didn't know what to do. Just at that moment, the door bell rang. I rushed to the door and there you stood, and your very first words were: "I am a physician—" I did not even wait to hear the rest of your sentence. Do you remember? I rushed you right into the room. What must you have thought of me?

JIMMIE.—Ah, madame, we physicians become used to such hurry calls.

WIFE.—Now, tell me, how did you happen to come to my door at that very moment?

JIMMIE.—(Hesitates). I was looking for rooms in the neighborhood....your house attracted me....and....

As this speech now stands it is reeled off in a breath, almost. It should be worked out into dialog so that each line take its origin in the one preceding it and the whole be endowed with cause. Why does the woman say all this? The author's purpose is sound and sane but it must be motivated into the characters. The value of the episode is its effect upon Clara. She is sitting there chafing under Jimmie's threat. If she forsakes him now, he will have his revenge. But Clara is half disposed to "throw up the job" because of her waking love for the lady. Think how this recounting of the ruse (with Jimmie nursing the poor woman's delusion) could be used to stimulate Clara's dawning distaste for crime. And it is a legitimate part of the Playlet. We want to know how these crooks got in the place. It would be TELLING to recite the thing, but here it can be utilized to help fix Clara's purpose. We invite all opinions and versions of the Scene. State definitely where you think your suggestions should be inserted.

We still lack a development of the dominating purpose; that spark of gratitude kindled in the girl's soul by disinterested kindness. None of the skits submitted contained the proper temper of this climax. From a composite of various fragments sent in, we have prepared a draft for an ending that should make a fitting conclusion. Viz.: Let the girl proceed much as she does in the January score, tossing the pearl to the woman and making her exit. She returns. She cannot go now. Jimmie threatened her. He meant what he said. Where is her plunder? The wife now comes to the rescue and offers the girl a refuge. She accepts. The reclamation is accomplished as far as a one-act Play can do the work. This sketch is to be presented at the Hotel Astor in April. Please forward your suggestions promptly. The fourth version will be printed in full in the July issue.

*A letter from Charles Rann Kennedy,
author of "The Servant in the House."*

257 WEST 86th STREET
NEW YORK

March 30, 1912.

Dear Sir,

I consider THE DRAMATIST, edited by Luther B. Anthony, the best publication I have yet seen, for educating young--and for that matter, old - playwrights, in the principles of their craft. I have read every number from the beginning; and it has been of the greatest assistance to me technically. I have learned a good deal from it.

It should be in the hands of every student of the modern drama, who is really serious about his work; and also I think it should find a place in the libraries of the country.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours very sincerely,

Charles Rann Kennedy

For criticism of your own Play, consult the Playwriting Department.

The DRAMATIST

LUTHER B. ANTHONY, Editor

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QUARTERLY

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JULY

What is Technic?

The average amateur looks upon Technic as a token of all that is tedious and immaterial. He fears that too much technical equipment will mar his originality. Let us glance behind the dictionary definition for the fuller meaning of the word.

Technic is the method of performance in any art. In its last analysis it is that means by which an author's message is interpreted to his audience in stage illustrations.

To attain Technic, therefore, is merely to facilitate interpretation. It is employing tools to perfect the work crudely performed by the bare hands. Instead of restricting talent it intensifies the fruits of fancy.

A Technic that hinders is merely a misnamed dogma. And while no amount of instruction will remedy the defect where there is a lack of constructive ingenuity, nevertheless, a clearer knowledge of the thing to be achieved cannot fail to be of service.

Our effort in these pages is to enunciate the general theories of Technic by practical application to the Plays you may see and read. In this way we may avoid unorganized generalizations. In every instance our analyses are deduced from simple first principles.

Moral: Apprehend the WHY!

THE MODEL.

Thomas Returns to Technic.

As dramatists advance in fortune they frequently retreat in technical restraint. This has been the case with Ibsen, Shaw, Strindberg, Jones, Pinero, Sudermann, Brieux and Thomas. Clyde Fitch was the single exception. "The Model" was written before "The Harvest Moon" or "As a Man Thinks" and it may be for this reason the Play is more a Play and less a preaching. It is less an appeal to consciousness through the intellect and more an approach to the emotions through the senses. It is less a theorem in psychic phenomena and more fundamentally a problem of life.

It is difficult to teach the intellectual dramatist that he cannot carry his audience with him. He lives in his mind and believes we do. The audience lives largely in its emotional shell. Ninety percent of all thought is subconscious and the true process of communicating a Conflict to the composite crowd is through this channel.

The true process of composition is likewise subconscious. The dramatist merely connects the wires of these spontaneous flashes and lets the creative current flow. The danger of exploited wisdom in playwriting then, is the perversion of the medium of the art.

Problem:

1. A novelist advises a friend to seduce his model.
2. The model proves to be the novelist's daughter.
3. He withdraws his advice and revises his morality.

Here is a Conflict involving a vital tug at the parental heartstrings—the third law of nature. It makes no demand on the intellectual muscles and carries conviction with multiplied force. Mr. Thomas is fortunate to revert to this specimen of his earlier craftsmanship. It is a lesson from his own works. It may check his recent tendency toward the thesis Play. If he confines his efforts to vital problems he may hold his heritage as the lineal successor to Fitch. If he soars aloof into the realm of hazy mysticism he can only exit from the portals of his art.

A R I Z O N A.

The Top Notch of Thomas Technic.

After treating of "The Model" as Mr. Thomas's later revision of an early manuscript it is well to go back to the early type of his playwriting to trace that virility so lacking in such efforts as "The Harvest Moon" and "As a Man Thinks."

Problem No. 1:

1. A wife is caught eloping with a cad.
2. The cad throws suspicion on an innocent man.
3. The wife clears the latter by confessing the truth.

Problem No. 2:

1. A lover kills the seducer of his sweetheart.
2. The seducer throws suspicion on an innocent man.
3. The lover confesses to the murder.

This double story tendency is a strain that pervades all of Mr. Thomas' work. It is seldom that he strikes two Plots so similar in Cause and so completely rounded within the time limits of one performance. The third and fourth Plots contained in this manuscript are of minor disturbance. All three biplots are made interdependent in a way but still they mar the economy of interest. Simplicity is the keynote of good construction and divided interest cannot possibly concentrate effect.

"The Model" pursues this same tendency in a lesser degree. The first story is more centralized. In "Arizona" an entire Act is taken up with the subsidiary Plot so that the Play proper is meantime obliterated.

On the whole, however, few Plays hold their own so faithfully. It has old fashioned notions of vicarious suffering, mock martyrdom, inflated diction and the premature recitation of events to come. But the situations based upon these obsolete ingredients are thrilling and suspensive. Relatively they are as strong as the best moments in "The Model" and undoubtedly surpass "The Harvest Moon" or "As a Man Thinks" for anything truly dramatic.

It is for this reason we welcome Mr. Thomas' return to technic. His best contributions to dramatic literature are remnants of the past. It is in the modern application of this former force that his promise lies. To emulate Ibsen or Shaw is the worst pace he can set for himself and for his practical playwriting proclivities. More drama, Mr. Thomas, and less psychology!

THE GOVERNOR'S LADY.

A New Type of Divorcee.

Problem:

1. A politician would divorce his old-fashioned wife.
2. She intercepts his betrothal to a younger woman.
3. The couple are re-united.

A glance at this digest of the Play will show that Alice Bradley has chosen a timely moral if not a deeply vital dramatic theme. If divorce is more vital to women than to men it nevertheless serves its theoretic purpose as a drawing card. In an era when a true wife is tossed aside with as much indifference as an old glove it is well that we have a Play to turn the searchlight on the sorrows of this cruel system.

The source of appeal in this Conflict is our sympathy for a life mate who is to be deserted for a younger woman. And it is here the Author shows her utmost skill. The character

of the capricious little wife is drawn with rare fidelity and force. The restraint with which the husband's intentions are withheld from her forms the highest pitch in the Plot. The crux of this situation is the keenest craftsmanship in the Play. It may be classed with the best Scene building done by American women.

The Plot as a whole is not clearly conceived. Its purpose is not concentrated. There are several bypaths to mislead us at the start. For two whole Acts a political intrigue promises to form the Play. The wife's divorce is feared only as a scandal that might defeat the husband's political prospects. It would seem that the author originally intended to make this her Conflict but abandoned it as the better idea presented. This better Plot is the problem above given. It takes birth towards the end of Act II and dissolves the earlier effusion.

The political element is purely abstract and should be adequately subordinated. It was needed to show the husband's ambition for a more fashionable helpmate. It is atmosphere. But the prominence given it makes it appear a fundamental feature.

Another bypath in Plot is the young attorney's tribulations. For lack of motivation he is the Author's undisguised instrument. He is plunged into the love interest without his own consent merely to serve as a quick recruit at the climax. On the other hand, this attorney threatens to create a new Conflict by his voluntary attack on the husband and so we digress from one false promise to another, betraying the credulity of the Audience.

In the brief space of time allotted for an evening's entertainment there is barely opportunity for the promotion of one valid, progressive line of Plot development. These diffusing elements merely make for instability.

The fourth Act is labeled an epilog. Analysis is therefore disarmed. No one would wish to deny David Belasco his penchant for naturalism. His scenic fac-simile of a restaurant is at once Child's. No higher tribute can be paid this consummate bit of stage painting. A word to the novice, however, who might deign to emulate this example, let him be sure that he has a wizard to work his wonder. At best these effects subtract from the Play proper, and only an exacting genius like Belasco can make a merit of the defect.

Of course these notes are based upon the preliminary performances of the Play. Before Mr. Belasco permits a Metropolitan premiere countless changes will be made.

BUNTY PULLS THE STRINGS.

The Epitome of Conflict.

In the various reviews of this play much has been said to the effect that it is not really a Play. And yet the dominant note of the piece is Conflict. Conflict abounds in every fibre of its substance. And is not Conflict the epitome of Drama?

Dramaturgic weakness is not its absence of dramatic essence. It is the fact that this essence is diffused, not concentrated. There are no two qualified opponents in the Conflict. Different factions fight out their individual differences at cross purposes with the Plot.

A main struggle is not built up between Bunty and her father, or Bunty and her family, or her family and the father, or the father and his prosecutor, or the female suitor and the widower, or the forsaken sweetheart and her mercenary rival. The piece is the accidental admixture of all these scraps, minus a paramount purpose. An abstract syllogism might be offered as follows:

Problem:

1. A father rules his household by the kirk's laws.
2. His daughter discovers his dishonesty.
3. She assumes command in the home.

This represents the outer boundary of the Play. But there are a dozen minor syllogisms. These fragmentary incidents should be subjugated to a controlling Conflict, and each be made a tributary to the Plot that depicts them. In their present state the parts all have equal value, so that structurally they do not supplement one another to compose one organic whole.

An isolated example of rare Scene-building is Bunty's inventory of the homely virtues of her father's fiancee. Mr. Moffat conducts this domestic court martial with homely sagacity, but fails to fit it into the cogs of Plot. He has a keen sense of homely wit and humor. He lacks a clear vision of the whole, that last attainment in the art of dramaturgy.

Then what is the secret of our great delight in "Bunty?" If we trace it to its origin our pride is rudely shocked. For the chief force of its humor is the license allowed us to deride our own religion thinly veiled by a winsome dialect. We scream at the artless antics of these infants in their ultra-orthodox piety. But beneath it is the stupidity of a blind faith that provokes our mirth. This is our chief source of delight in a nutshell.

And here we have a refutation of an old fallacy that religious topics are taboo for the stage. It requires the canny Scot to prepare this dainty dish of infidelity. It is a toothsome

import for the most devout, and in the last analysis a burlesque of worship poking pious fun at faith. What does it mean? Are we all infidels by proxy? Shades of Ingersoll! how the ghost of old "Bob" must snicker!

THE GREYHOUND.

Clever Dime Novel Drama.

It is impossible to reduce this interesting series of implausible episodes to a consistent syllogism. It is not a Play. It is a dime novel melodrama done into a comic opera book without words. Its characters are as impossible as its incidents. We never take them seriously. Its suicides and crimes are as preposterous as the tick of the clock in the crocodile's belly.

Its chief merit is that it is never dull or doleful. The morbid lure of the underworld obscures our sense of perverted moral. These crooks whose only rightful place is prison, seem fascinating fellows. And the millionaires they victimize really glory in their loss.

Mr. Armstrong preserves his past record for loose logic. A convention of crooks in a woman's private bed room, a congregation of the entire cast on board the same ship; these are trifles in the author's library of stern probabilities.

But there is one feature of progress in this Play. The thing is not offered in a serious vein. It makes no pretense at reality. Taken as a flight of fancy or a fairy tale, the fable works little mischief. Its only evil is for those who make a meaning of their own.

PRESERVING MR. PANMURE.

Two Distinct and Unrelated Plays.

Problem:

1. A husband kisses his daughter's governess.
2. A young man assumes the blame.
3. She marries him.

The last Act in this piece is a skit in itself, totally disconnected from the Play itself. The first three Acts practically comprise the play, for Mr. Panmure's fate ceases to be a problem in the fourth appendage.

That Mr. Pinero is put to such an extremity to eke out a comedy is one of the saddest signs of the Play paucity in the present season. This is by far the worst specimen he has perpetrated in recent years. It will go far towards turning the attention of American managers from imported products.

The London trademark is no longer a patent promise of New York success. Nor should this be the guide. The slow, stolid nature of the British type is no safe measure for the active, impulsive American spectator.

But there are some dashes of dramatic deftness not to be ignored, even though the structure as a whole is a failure. The second act is exemplary comedy with every evidence of the author's practiced hand. The situation where Panmure holds an inquest to detect the culprit is funny. But this only emphasizes the banalities of the other Acts. The first is muddled boredom, and the third is aimless and absurd. Where is the trace of that exquisite treatment displayed in "The Thunder-bolt?"

THE TALKER.

A Fierce Thrust at Frivolity.

Technically it is a truth that "THE TALKER" is TALK. It begins by attempting to talk the audience into possession of the Plot and ends failing to materialize one of the principals. The "Heavy Villain" remains merely a topic of conversation.

Problem:

1. A wife pretends to advocate free love.
2. Her sister puts this theory into practice.
3. The wife regrets her loose conduct and reclaims the girl.

As an emotional agent "The Talker" is easily one of the most vital plays of the season. It aims a fierce thrust at frivolity. Crude in parts it gives promise of a playwright, with a keen sense of dramatic material. Marion Fairfax has a fair endowment of this precious faculty for touching the well-springs of emotion.

She has not made up her mind, however, that all of the Play may be played. Some of the essentials of Plot are omitted or obscured by talk while frequently mere incidents are visualized in detail.

One flagrant example of the first offense is the Play's opening. An attempt to show the wife's flirtation and the sister's fascination with a libertine is discussed at much length by three women whose identities are not clearly established. We do not know that they are wife, sister-in-law and neighbor for the reason that they are not brought into explanatory contact with those who might portray these relationships. At like emergencies all through Acts I and II the program comes to the rescue.

The Play is not allowed to end when the Conclusion is reached. A secondary denouement is appended. Truckling to the tradition that everything must end happily, a sequel to the young girl's vicissitudes is hatched up. Her former lover is required to default so that he may be degraded to her moral plane and their union is promised.

But despite these structural errors, the Play makes a vivid impression and deserves marked praise for uniting good entertainment with a moral purpose. It teaches something.

THE VOYSEY INHERITANCE.

A Satire on Financial Confidence.

Problem:

1. A boy inherits the insolvent business of his father.
2. He attempts to continue to pay off helpless creditors.
- 3.

As indicated above there is no third clause to form a Conclusion. The crisis is reached when the boy discloses his Father's bequest of fraud to his family. At this point Mr. Barker challenges the intricate character analysis of Pinero in "The Thunderbolt." The Scene rings true with reality. But Mr. Barker is forever analyzing. He vivisects every angle of emotion until the piece becomes more clinic than Play.

Attached to this Conflict is the love story of a girl who eggs on the hero to risk imprisonment to discharge the debt. Their betrothal is hitched on as a Conclusion to the Play proper. In reality it is an arbitrary ending of the author's isolated thought.

From page 84 to 90 we are invited to review a lot of effects without causes. The boy is disturbed about something. We are merely told that he is upset. The dramatic method of showing his concern by the cause itself is not used. The author presumably thinks the mystery stronger than the fact; to arouse our curiosity is more potent than to supply the ingredients of suspense.

But if Act I is boredom, Act II is sound asleep! Items of ordinary life are emphasized while Plot essentials are ignored. On page 122 a Plot hint escapes. We learn that a client has all his savings invested in the firm. On 129 we have more recitation of the father's system of misappropriation but no picture.

A single incident, a solitary application from a defrauded customer for the principal of his interest and the manifest inability of the father to produce would be the dramatization of what now transpires in TALK. In the place of testimony we would have evidence, in the place of hearsay, a dramatic fact.

Act III finds us at the father's funeral without the consent of Plot. His death happens between acts from no cause consistent with the Conflict. There is considerable mock martyrdom here. The boy entertains fears of imprisonment without the slightest provocation. He will commit a felony to solace his sweetheart's vague ideals of altruism. The Play makes no demand for this. It is the conception of a brand new Conflict.

In Act IV we begin to drift. The Plot roams helplessly and we are undecided whether Edward is crooked or straight. One thing certain. His business experience, to our knowledge, does not warrant faith in his ability to carry out an enormous scheme. The manipulation of this enterprise was all his crafty father could manage, and he had passed an apprenticeship. The boy is utterly without instruction in this crooked craft. Pages 174 to 183 attribute some clever discourse to old Booth and the boy. This Scene would have considerable merit if there were any semblance of premise to rest upon.

A stupid family conference consumes most of the Fifth Act. Why these domestic details should obtrude is not explained. Possibly some veiled notion of atmosphere dictated them. What we expect is further development of the misappropriation Plot. We do not find that the boy has succeeded in paying off lessor creditors, and the trumped up prospect of imprisonment is abruptly dropped. The colloquy between lovers is anything but a conclusion to the first Conflict. Perhaps the author has some hidden meaning of his own. Of what avail if it conveys no composite moral to the subconscious crowd? Its mysterious message is essay, not Drama.

Note: These Plays are published in one volume by Mitchell Kennerly, New York. Price \$1.50. The book also contains another play by the same author, "Ann Leete."

W A S T E . *

A Manager-Made Play.

We are always clamoring for more intimate knowledge of the stage for the student. Is there such a thing as too much theatrical training for the tyro? Mr. Barker's earnest attempts at Playwriting would seem to say so. Here is a dramatist who is at the same time actor, stage manager and producer. His eye is so everlastingly alert for the opportunity in each of these branches that he ends in a muddled melange.

From amateur to adept, this is the range covered by Granville Barker in "Waste." Some scenes have all the pungency of Pinero while others challenge the awkwardest amateur under the sun. Of course, we speak from a strictly technical standpoint based on a standard prescribed by the Play itself.

*Mitchell Kennerly, New York. Price \$1.50.

As example of crude, immature construction we call attention to the first 18 pages of drift in the published version. (Pages 216 to 234). This gradates from idle discussion to the profoundest slumber. The harangue is stupid and dull. The characters conversing are not concerned and not one thing really happens in the interval. On 234 is the first bit of dialog. It occurs between two people who have something to say. From now on there is more or less doing till the end of the Act. The curtain is an emotional crisis at the cost of all moral scruple. Two mature individuals are required to toy with a salacious phase of the cosmi urge. It is not shown that they share this passion. At the author's instance the puppets respond. Barring this absence of volition the Scene is drawn with a master stroke and the situation assumes magnitude in a twinkling. The passing of the participants is vivisected.

From 243 to 250 there is little else than an inconsequent prattle of politics. The author presupposes our interest in these abstractions. On 254 the telephone relieves the monotony. There is word that the Plot is still living. The remainder of the Scene vitally interests us. The parental law is involved. But the chasm between amateur and adept is again portrayed in the two extremes of craftsmanship.

From 268 to 293 we have a sample of spurious commonplaces. Now we arrive at the prime situation of the Play, intensely unique and modern. The rest of the Act is just as supremely stupid. It is hard to reconcile such epochs of drift after one or two full breaths of drama. Again from skill to incompetence.

The chief flaw in Act IV is not the fact that the curtain is twice lowered. So far as the Play proper is concerned the Act as a whole is an error. The author drives on his hero to suicide to fulfil his theme.

Page 333, the incident of the sister's innocence of the brother's guilt is a touch of suspense worth noting. Taken as an isolated instance of treatment it has merit and delicacy.

"Waste" is more apparent in the misuse of irrelevant forces than in the moral conveyed. This moral which should be as clear as the day is concealed in clouded obscurity.

PUTTING IT OVER.

Dramatizing the National Game.

There is no sport that absorbs the attention of a larger portion of the population than baseball. It is very difficult to dramatize this enthusiasm into a serviceable theatrical conflict, but it looks very much as though Frank Hatch and Lee Arthur might successfully capitalize this pastime by subordinating a few extraneous features of "Putting it Over."

All drama is Conflict, and baseball is a conflict between chosen sides. The sport, therefore, lends itself to ready stage transposition. The gravest fault in this Play is that the baseball feature has not been allowed to predominate. Other elements of plotly encumbrance absorb too much of the interest that should be centered in the hero of the diamond. Plot complications may make this look necessary, but it is not.

Problem:

1. A pitcher renounces baseball to solace his sweetheart.
2. To avert his father's disgrace he re-enters the game.
3. The girl forgives him when she learns his heroic motive.

This is the gist of "Putting It Over" so far as the authors stick to the rules of their own game. They play ball on another field when they send the hero out to thrash an editor's son in order that they may trump up a motive for the father's misappropriation of funds to save his boy from jail. This is spurious entanglement. If these motives could be founded on something in keeping with baseball Plot purpose would be fostered, whereas the outside incidents brought in to brace up motive merely subtract from the progress of the Play proper. The extraneous agency of the aunt is one of these disorders. She is no more or less than a mouthpiece of the authors. Her financial vicissitudes as a Fifth Avenue dressmaker do not belong in this game of ball. No amount of tinkering could make her a principal in the Plot, and her intrusion into the Conflict merely blurs the legitimate course. This character should be subordinated to her normal position as chaperon to the girl.

A commendable phase of the treatment is the truthful estimate of ballplaying as a profession. The authors show it up in its true colors. It is assigned its proper place in the category of healthful sports, but is not idealized with misleading glamor for the intoxication of aspiring youth.

But all these remarks are based upon a preliminary try-out of the production. Many of the defects, no doubt, will be eliminated in the course of rehearsals. The Play has an abundance of marketable material upon which the efforts of the authors should concentrate.

THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR.*

A Satire on Social Supremacy.

A welcome recruit to the file of published Plays is this success of three seasons past. To readers of "The Dramatist" it will be twice welcome since so many of our cherished theories are successfully put into practice.

*Walter H. Baker & Co., Boston. Price 50c.

As a model of Unity few Plays can surpass it. It has a single purpose into which all minor episodes are merged. Cohesion is intricate. All parts contribute to the whole. The Plot is replete with expectation and suspense. The dominant danger hangs over our heads like a threatening thunderstorm.

Character is well drawn because it is created by Conflict. Even the negative types are pronounced for their distinctive personality. The entire structure revolves around the irate old fossil whose peevish spleen is a visual property of the Plot. He is a gradual growth before us within the time limits of the Play.

The Conflict is properly divided into acts. Three Acts! The curtains are well timed and effective. The greatest possible promise is yielded. At the end of Act II the fate of four souls hinges on the suspended issue of the two chief combatants.

Problem:

1. A bankrupt gentile hates a prosperous Jew.
2. Their children fall in love.
3. The enemies are reconciled.

The defects of this structure are so trifling they may well be ignored. It would be quibbling to locate a few minor flaws when such infinite inspiration is afforded the aspirant. Mr. J. Hartley Manners has Americanized the German version with rare skill.

THE HOME THRUST.*

A Suffrage Playlet.

The National Woman Suffrage Association has entered the theatrical field as a factor for publicity. They have issued a list of manuscript Plays written by women of literary and public prominence. The rights to these scripts are held by the association and permission to produce them is granted on royalty.

"The Home Thrust" is one of this number. It is a fine Play idea minus the suspense that spells dramatic interest. Not until the last page do we receive that information calculated to excite expectation. Without this factor there can be no suspense. Without suspense there is no such thing as drama. Plot lapses into storybook style and the surprise is sprung on us instead of the principal implicated.

*National Woman Suffrage Association, N. Y. Price 10c.

The exponents of a great cause are not the best judges of Plays to propagate their theories. This playlet, for instance, would undoubtedly delight a Suffrage audience. Each advocate would contribute a Conflict of her own out of her stock on hand of enthusiasm. But the aim, of course, is to reach the enemy. Long epochs of undramatized talk will have little influence in that direction. The skeptic must be reached through his eye, not his ear. A stage picture painting a Suffrage fact is the thing to strive for. Seeing is believing.

T H E C L I M B E R S.*

Fitch's First Great Play.

Problem:

1. A wife's admirer saves a husband from disgrace.
2. He falsely accuses them of adultery.
3. The wife's contempt drives husband to suicide.

A glance at this Problem reveals the deep current of Conflict that pervades this play. It is the first of a long list of powerful dramas from the pen of this prolific playwright. His technical skill advanced steadily after this success until its abrupt climax in his last work, "The City." No other modern dramatist has shunned the pitfalls of intellectual vagaries so successfully. He could not be beguiled into false flights of metaphysics. He made his appeal to the heart, not the head.

"The Climbers" is not free from structural flaws, as we now feel them. Characters frequently indulge in asides, lapse into monolog, and attempt to retail the Plot prematurely. On page 57 is an example of this offence: "Ned Warden's always ready to take you anywhere you like." Fitch would not have made this blunder in his later work. Restraint would postpone all mention of the husband's rival till the character is introduced.

Such violations of sequence merely betray an amateur's eagerness to push the facts across. On page 59 the author talks Sterling's financial troubles into Blanche to enlighten us. The Play should SHOW this. On 69, 70, 71 and 72 we have the aimless efforts of the amateur, to paint crooked character by comment. The balance of the act is given over to episodic comedy of a Clyde Fitch quality. It is wholly unnecessary to the Plot and serves no purpose even in the delay of developments, but the comedy is not out of keeping with the Play proper and bears no strain upon the imagination. The author's creative art is at its keenest in this episode, but only the master can venture such purposeless interludes after the

*Samuel French, New York. Price 50 cents.

Conflict is once started. Blanche's soliloquy after reading the father's letter at end of Act I is the crudest craftsmanship in the Play.

Act II advances the Conflict more steadily. Sterling's ruin is accomplished offstage, and told to us in talk. The weight of this Act is enlivened by Trotter's eccentricities. The final confession in the dark is theatrical, but highly effective.

On 191 the "suffering dog" episode is a specimen of crude device later discarded by this great craftsman. 195 shows the author's ability in riding over the rough places. Pages 203, 204, 205, 206 and 207 develop magnificent situation and reach the crisis of the Conflict. Warden's affection is portrayed in a clean, straightforward fashion. Some forceful work will be found on page 211 where Blanche's confessed love drives Sterling to desperation. At the end of this act (III) our sympathies are all for the wife and her lover. We long for their union.

Act IV is largely the art of stretching it over. The vain attempt of the husband to regain his wife's love is the obstacle to our coveted Conclusion. The subtlety of treatment here is marvelous. On 251 the fist fight is to be deplored. It mars a wonderful ending. The pathetic death of the hopeless weakling is treated with rare skill and restraint and good taste marks the final curtain.

THE WOMAN WITH THE DAGGER.*

First Act Follows the Second.

In this little play by Arthur Schnitzler the usual sequence of events is entirely reversed. The past upon which the story is founded follows the present. The ancient portrait of a lady holding a dagger is employed as a talisman in the fate of a married woman and her lover.

The second tableau enacts the incident of earlier ages that inspired the original painting. The principals are the same in an earlier stage of transmigration. This scene predicts the doom awaiting the illicit relations of the lovers. The author desires to foreshadow the ironic fate that holds them in its clutch.

This mockery of fate appeals to the poetic temperament. It is a gripping drama of the Little Theatre school. But it has no relation to the realistic Play and would not serve as a guide to the modern student.

The introductory dialog is distinctly the work of the amateur. It bears no imprint of the master. Our energies are wasted in an effort to grasp the scattered fragments of thought

*The Moods Publishing Co., New York. Price 20 cents.

that mystify our dawning impressions of the Plot. The first thing we SEE is the young man's love for the married woman, and this is impaired by the false premises it rests upon. Much of the remainder of the first part is mere narrative. The second scene is much more adequately presented, for here we see the husband intercept the illicit lovers. This is drama for the moment.

The theme is not elevating, no matter how true to the decree of a superstitious fate that defies danger. The piece has no moral purpose. It excels the same author's efforts in "Anatol" because it has the virtue of theoretic effectiveness even while it precludes conviction. It is not based upon our beliefs.

T H E U N W R I T T E N L A W .

A Motive in Mental Suggestion.

Problem:

1. Under suggestive influence a wife kills her lover.
2. Her divorced husband assumes the crime.
3. She saves her husband by a subconscious disclosure.

Briefly, the Plot is this: A woman, deserted by her husband accepts the bounty of her landlord with the understanding that he will marry her when she is divorced. He fails to keep his promise and she stabs him under the temporary influence of suggestion. Her divorced husband assumes the crime and a hypnotist establishes the fact that she committed it under occult mental motive.

The theme is timely as echoed by scores of modern murder cases where the brain-storm theory is introduced. But Mr. Royle has not concentrated sufficiently on this theme to obtain the fullest net result. The idea is excellent but its earlier execution miscarries. Expecting a Play consistent with the title we vainly endeavor to construct some such issue out of a number of false introductions.

The rumsodden father is so over emphasized that we naturally expect Plot to take genesis through him. But nothing comes of it. The father does nothing but forsake his family. Failing in this snare we catch at the next. A youthful attorney courts the drunkard's daughter. From hints that are dropped we might easily surmise he will ruin the child and the "unwritten law" to the rescue. Again we are fooled.

And with all these false premises the main Plot conditions are badly ignored. We should see that the landlord's game to deceive the mother. But in the preliminary Acts he is her guardian angel. When his true colors are displayed it is too

late. We are asked to despise a man we love for his disinterested loyalty. There is a blundering attempt to get his sensuality over in a talk scene with a suffragette. But this is tame testimony in the face of the landlord's charities we have actually witnessed.

All of which illustrates the imperative need of telling Plot essentials to the eye, not the ear. Seeing is believing. Hearing may not even be heard! The related fact may be fixed in the minds of some of the auditors, the visible performance is the only indelible means of fastening it upon all. And this is the definition of drama. DOING!

Of course these comments are purely technical. The Play as it stands deals with a vital problem and delivers a telling "punch." We might devote equal space to the merits of a Play. It is a work worthy of study from that standpoint as well.

Books for Dramatic Students

TECHNIQUE OF THE DRAMA.*

By Dr. Gustav Freytag.

This book was written by the great German novelist, scholar, poet, critic, editor, soldier, publicist, and successful playwright, Gustav Freytag—the only instance of a dramatist formulating a treatise on the technique of his art.

Aristotle in his "Poetics" and Lessing in his "Dramatic Notes" preceded him in the enunciation of certain dramatic principles, but he was the first author to formulate the principles of his craft into a synthesis.

This work was published about the time of our Civil War, and of course in some minor details has become a little antiquated owing to the phenomenally rapid evolution of the dramatic art, but in the eternal principles of drama it is as vital today as when first published.

It has gone through six editions, and will go through many more before its career of usefulness is over. It is one of the great classics that every dramatic student should read.

* Scott, Foresman & Co., Chicago. Price \$1.50.

THE APPRECIATION OF THE DRAMA.*

By Charles H. Caffin.

This is a keen and most comprehensive treatise on dramatic technology. It should be adopted as a text-book by every university placing scientific study of the drama in the curriculum.

It traces the evolution of drama through its plastic and pictorial phases and gives its history in compact form possibly more valuable to the modern student than any tedious review of the works themselves.

The analysis of Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler" illustrates ably and in a synthetic manner nearly every principle involved in a play. Our only regret is that the author has not applied this same talent to the flagrant flaws of construction in this piece. The findings of his acute perception would be highly interesting.

Mr. Charles H. Caffin, the author, is to be congratulated upon his point of view, acquired through a keen knowledge of other arts, which should prove of infinite service to modern dramatists, actors and students of technic. There is no other book of its class that we can so heartily and unreservedly endorse.

A GUIDE TO PICTURES.*

Here is a book written by a distinguished dramatic critic on a closely allied art. Told in clear, concise, comprehensive English its points strike home. Of especial interest to aspiring playwrights are the chapters on:

The Feeling for Beauty

Art and Her Twin Sister Nature

Nature is Haphazard; Art is Arrangement

Contrast

The Action, Movement, and Composition of the Figure

Naturalistic Composition

Color—Values—Subtlety

Color—Texture, Atmosphere, Tone

Brush-work and Drawing

Subject, Motive, and Point of View

The illustrations are accompanied by diagrams which assist the beginners and student. The art of playwriting is so essentially a picture building process that "A Guide to Picture" becomes a handbook for dramatists.

*Doubleday, Page Co., Garden City, N. Y. Price \$1.50.

P L A Y - M A K I N G . *
A Manual of Craftsmanship.
By William Archer.

The gravest mistake an authority like William Archer could have made would be to leave no record of his observations. "Play-Making" is a fitting monument to a life devoted to dramatic analysis and translation. It is a work of permanent value that will doubtless go down in the annals of dramaturgy as the most important contribution of the age.

Mr. Archer holds many points in common with the doctrines advanced in *The Dramatist*. One is that the best aid to the aspirant is negative criticism. Another, that drama renounces its chief privilege and glory when it ceases to be a popular art. And a third, he has little time for the untheatrical theatre. Following is the list of Chapters:

BOOK I—Prologue.

- 1 Introductory.
- 2 The Choice of a Theme.
- 3 Dramatic and Undramatic.
- 4 The Routine of Composition.
- 5 *Dramatis Personae.*

BOOK II—The Beginning.

- 6 The Point of Attack: Shakespeare and Ibsen.
- 7 Exposition: Its End and Its Means.
- 8 The First Act.
- 9 "Curiosity" and "Interest."
- 10 Foreshadowing, not Forestalling.

BOOK III—The Middle.

- 11 Tension and Its Suspension.
- 12 Preparation: The Finger-Post.
- 13 The Obligatory Scene.
- 14 The Peripety.
- 15 Probability, Chance and Coincidence.
- 16 Logic.
- 17 Keeping a Secret.

BOOK IV—The End.

- 18 Climax and Anticlimax.
- 19 Conversion.
- 20 Blind-Alley Themes and Others.
- 21 The Full Close.

BOOK V—Epilogue.

- 22 Character and Psychology.
- 23 Dialogue and Details.

A glance at these chapters affords a taste of the choice feast in store for the student. Suffice it to say that no modern playwright's repertoire is complete without thrice reading this valuable handbook of craftsmanship by one of the world's greatest dramatic authorities.

*Small, Maynard & Co., Boston. Price \$2.00 net.

AMERICAN PLAYGOERS.

The Coburn Players.

At the Spring meeting of the American Playgoers Mrs. and Mr. Coburn were the special guests of the club. Mr. Coburn made an address on open air productions and their influence upon the playgoing public. His authoritative comments and statistics on this subject were of absorbing interest to our members and guests.

Mrs. Coburn accompanied by other members of "The Coburn Players" produced the fourth version of "The Pearl" to the delight and satisfaction of all. Their undertaking can be appreciated with more enthusiasm when it is revealed that they had only a few hours in which to commit the parts and evolve many factors of original stage business.

The usual discussion followed the production and a great many humorous suggestions were offered. One member proposed that the pseudo physician administer the wrong dose and that Clara's gratitude to the wife be founded upon her narrow escape and recovery. But the burden of the argument rested upon the fact that there was not time to reclaim Clara from the degradation of a thief and this contention was finally overturned by a member who showed distinctly that there is no such reclamation attempted. Readers of "The Dramatist" may determine for themselves, the justice of these points in the playlet that follows. Few changes having since been made, the sketch is substantially the same as presented.

THE PEARL.

(Fourth Revision.)

Characters { Widow
 Clara
 Jimmy

SCENE: A handsomely furnished parlor in a first-floor apartment. Doors C. & L., Windows R.

At rise of curtain the widow is seated, reading a book. The door bell rings. She leaves the room to answer it. Voices are heard. She ushers in Clara, who carries a large satchel.

WIDOW—Yes, your references were quite satisfactory. (She resumes her chair and Clara makes a secret signal to someone through window.)

CLARA—Then I'm to start at once? (Setting satchel on a chair.)

WIDOW—There's no hurry. Sit down a moment and I'll explain your duties. (Clara seats herself) You'll find your position a little difficult here. I don't make servants of my maids. I prefer to be companionable.

CLARA—Oh, I thank you.

WIDOW—What was your name, again?

CLARA—Clara.

WIDOW—Oh, yes, Clara. A very pretty name.

CLARA—Thank you.

WIDOW—I think I'm going to like you Clara.

CLARA—Thank you. I hope so. (Door bell rings) Shall I go?

WIDOW—No, never mind. (Widow answers the bell and in her absence Clara cautiously surveys the premises. She tip-toes into the room on the left and returns hurriedly resuming her chair. Man's voice is heard off stage: "Is this Mrs. Brown's apartment?"

WIDOW (off stage)—No, she lives on the floor above. (Clara deliberately knocks over a chair and pretends to faint beside it.)

WIDOW (looking into the room)—What was that? (She hurries to Clara) Oh, she has fainted!

JIMMY (Appears C. carrying small medicine case)—Can I be of any assistance?

WIDOW—Oh, if you will, please, go for a doctor.

JIMMY—(Opening his medicine case) I happen to be....

WIDOW—You're a physician? Oh, thank heaven! Then you can attend her.

JIMMY—(Taking Clara's pulse) Any smelling salts in the house?

WIDOW—Yes....yes....(Exits hurriedly L.)

JIMMY—(To Clara, under his breath) Where's the swag?

CLARA—(Pointing L.) In there.

JIMMY—Have you doped it out?

CLARA—Yes, she's all alone. Send her out for something. (Widow returns with smelling salts which she hands to Jimmy.)

WIDOW—Is she any better, doctor?

JIMMY—Her....Her heart seems weak....very weak. (Administers salts bottle, then fumbles in medicine case) Have you any digitalis?

WIDOW—No, but there's a drug store in the next block.

JIMMY—We'd better send out for a little.

WIDOW—I'll have to go myself.

JIMMY—Sorry to trouble you.

WIDOW—Oh, no trouble at all.

JIMMY—(Rubbing Clara's hands vigorously) I can't leave my patient.

WIDOW—I'll hurry. (She goes out C.) (Clara and Jimmy listen till outer door is heard to close. Then both spring to their feet.)

JIMMY—Now what?

CLARA—That's her room (indicating L.) get on the job. (Clara stands guard at door C. Jimmy hurries off L....Noise of rummaging heard).

CLARA—Anything doing?

JIMMY—(Off L.) Hah....! Here's the swag.

CLARA—That's the talk! Kid, but come across, come across.

JIMMY—(Enters L. with jewel-box) Her little Klondike junk-box.

CLARA—(Lifting out a diamond brooch with large pearl centre) Whee! That's some pearl!

JIMMY—It's sure a beaute! (He returns brooch to jewel-case).

CLARA—(Opening her satchel) Sink it, kid, she's coming!

JIMMY—And I'll beat it. (Taking the satchel).

CLARA—Not on your life. (She grabs the satchel and resumes attitude of patient. Jimmy is fanning her with his hat when widow enters.)

WIDOW—I haven't been too long, doctor? (Handing him a small bottle.)

JIMMY—Not a bit.

WIDOW—How is she, now?

JIMMY—Still a little weak. If she has a relapse give her ten drops of this. (Takes up his medicine case) I'm forgetting my patient; on the next floor, you say?

WIDOW—Yes. But your fee, doctor?

JIMMY—I'll send you a bill, madam. (To Clara) Remember, Miss, plenty of exercise in the open air. (To Widow) Good day, madame. Good-afternoon, Miss. (Widow shows Jimmy out. Clara rises and takes up her hat but hides it as widow re-enters.)

WIDOW—(Surprised at seeing Clara standing) Why, Clara, are you strong enough?

CLARA—I'm very much better, thank you.

WIDOW—Oh, I'm so glad. I was so worried about you, child.

CLARA—You've been awfully kind, madam. (Takes up her hat again.)

WIDOW—You're going out?

CLARA—You heard what the doctor ordered... (She puts on her hat.)

WIDOW—Are you sure he would approve?

CLARA—He recommended exercise. (She puts her hand on her satchel.)

WIDOW—But you don't need to take your bag?

CLARA—Yes.

WIDOW—Clara, you're going to leave?

CLARA—I....I've got to.

WIDOW—You're not satisfied with the place?

CLARA—It's not that, madam, my health is so poor.....

WIDOW—My dear girl, I'll take care of you. Let me make you some broth now.

CLARA—Oh, no, madam, you're too kind. I don't deserve it.

WIDOW—But I like you Clara, and I'm sure you'll find me congenial. Besides, I'm all alone. I need a nice young companion like you. I'll not make you feel you're a servant.

CLARA—Oh, I know that, madam, but....

WIDOW—Well, make up your mind to stay a few days, anyhow.

CLARA—I can't madam, I've deceived you....

WIDOW—Deceived me, in what way?

CLARA—In applying here for work. I am.....I am not.....

WIDOW—You are not a servant....?

CLARA—No.

WIDOW—Then why did you pretend you were?

CLARA—Oh, I can't tell you....

WIDOW—You must have been badly in need, Clara. You'll have to work somewhere. Why not stay here? I'll teach you. I'd be willing to put up with a few inconveniences because you're a girl I could have confidence in.

CLARA—Oh, don't. Please don't!

WIDOW—But you're not strong, you need a home and some one to care for you.

CLARA—I must get out in the air—I'm stifling.

WIDOW—(Laying her hand on the satchel) But you won't take your things?

CLARA—(Jerking satchel away) Oh, don't!

(Clara betrays fear of exposing her loot.)

WIDOW—Why, what's the matter?

CLARA—Oh, nothing, nothing.

WIDOW—But you're not fit to carry that heavy bag.

CLARA—Oh, I can manage it.

WIDOW—You forget, you just fainted, Clara.

CLARA—No I didn't.....

WIDOW—Why, yes you did, don't you recall, we had to have the doctor?

CLARA—He wasn't a doctor.

WIDOW—Why Clara. You're delirious....

CLARA—Really, madam, I must go.

WIDOW—You're going to leave me for good?

CLARA—Yes, I'm sorry, but.....

WIDOW—Oh, Clara, and I'd set my heart on keeping you.

CLARA—You'll not lose much. I'm not what you think me.

WIDOW—Then tell me, Clara....?

CLARA—Oh, no madam, I can't!

WIDOW—I'm sure you can trust me Clara, I trust you.

CLARA—(Breaking down) Oh, I wish I were dead! I wish I were dead!

WIDOW—Why, Clara, my poor little girl. You frighten me. What troubles you dear?

CLARA—(Fumbling in her satchel she draws out the jewel case and places it on table) There, now you know! (She prepares to go.)

WIDOW—Clara! You?

CLARA—Yes. Good day! (She hurries out C. as widow opens jewel-case.) (She takes out the pearl and looks at it.)

CURTAIN.

THE NEWER COURAGE.

(To Charles Rann Kennedy.)

“A Newer Courage, Dealing with Life, not Death.”
Because eternal themes your thoughts engage,
Your words shall live, and shall outlast our years.
Ever the mightiest of our poet-seers
Looked in their souls to write; the noblest page
Is that which gives God’s message to the age,
And if in all the throng, it reach the ears
Of one who grasps the motive that he hears,
The prophet proves his sacred heritage.
Ever the poet’s aim is to express
The things best known to his own consciousness.
You proved the newer courage, you who hurled
The cheap lure from you, of the mob’s applause,
To find your theme in God’s divinest laws—
The sacred drama that transformed the world!

—Mary Brent Whiteside.

Plots of the World's Best Plays

In this department the Plots of all the World's Best Plays will be published. By Plot we do not mean the story of the Play but a compact outline revealing the structural anatomy only. Many plays that do not contain a Plot germ are omitted from this list for the reason that they mislead the student technically. The plays are listed according to the alphabetical order of authors, not titles.

A

B R E A D .

By Conrad Albery.

A peasant leader burns the castle of a lord in his fight to secure bread for his men. He falls in love with the lord's daughter whom he rescues from the flames. The girl aspires to the crown for her new found lover. She is spirited away and imprisoned. At a critical moment the lover deserts his soldiers in order to recapture his sweetheart and returns with her in time to prevent their defeat in battle. The girl is killed for having caused the leader to break faith with his followers.

T H E D A N G E R O U S A U N T .

By Albini.

A father objects to his son's attentions paid an actress. Masquerading as her own aunt she captivates the old man. When informed that she is of noble birth he proposes marriage. The truth is now revealed by the son and the father is compelled to sanction their marriage.

A N N E O F T H A R A U .

By Willibald Alexis.

A professor writes a love poem for a young captain who intends it for the girl whose life he has saved and to whom the professor is virtually betrothed. The girl falls madly in love with the captain but incidentally secures high honors for the professor's poetic proclivities.

P H I L I P I I .

By Vittorio Alsieri.

A tyrannical king suspects his own son's love for the queen, the boy's young stepmother. He contrives to lead the queen to betray her partiality for the boy and then condemns him to death on a trumped up charge of treason. The friend who succeeded in liberating the boy is assassinated and the latter is

again imprisoned on the charge of attempted parricide based upon the king's dream. The queen is now decoyed into aiding the boy to escape. The king surprises her. Both she and the boy kill themselves.

T H E T H A T C H E R.

By Angely.

A thatcher seeks shelter from a thunderstorm in the room of a law student. As a joke he dresses up in the attire of the absent student. Meantime the student falls heir to a fortune and the thatcher, to prevent arrest for theft carries out the counterfeit. Finally the thatcher is called upon to rescue the student from a threatening fire and the latter is discovered as the rightful heir. The thatcher is rewarded for his valour and all ends happily.

T H E U G L I E S T O F S E V E N.

By Angely.

A young man is bequeathed a fortune on condition that he marry the ugliest of seven sisters. He had already fallen in love with an unknown girl on a journey and it is with great joy that he finds she is one of the seven. But in reality she is the most beautiful. The judges are three old maids. The girl provokes them by her intentional pranks and out of revenge they pronounce her the homeliest. The young couple are so delighted with this verdict that they increase the fee of the judges.

T H E M I S T R E S S O F S T. T R O P E Z.

By Anicet-Bourgeois.

A girl forsakes a young doctor whom she loves and marries her father's creditor to avert financial ruin. A relative of the creditor who suffers disinheritance on account of this marriage betrays the girl's love for the doctor. The husband happens to be the young doctor's benefactor, having founded his education and although the young wife has been true and loyal he is hurt to think that she really loves another. The relative goes as far as to poison the husband and cast suspicion on the young wife. The doctor rescues him. The young wife's innocence is established and she learns to esteem her husband.

T H E P E R J U R E R.

By Ludwig Anzengruber.

A man secures the inheritance of a deceased brother by burning the will and taking an oath that no will exists. He is caught in the act by his own son. The will bequeathed all the brother's wealth to his illegitimate children. One of these, a daughter, discovers evidence of a will and the uncle is declared

a perjurer. He attempts to recover the evidence from the girl but she evades him saying that his own son had already obtained it. The father goes mad after shooting his son but the latter is nursed back to health by the illicit cousin, and they fall in love.

THE PRIEST OF CHURCHFIELD.

By Ludvig Anzengruber.

A Priest employs a young orphan in his household and eventually becomes much attached to the girl. His renunciations of priesthood weigh sadly upon him. In the past he has incurred the hatred of a man in his congregation by declining to marry him to a woman of different faith. This fellow learns of a golden crucifix that the priest has given the orphan. He slanders the priest and succeeds in alienating the confidence of his congregation. The girl, meantime, has fallen in love with another and the priest is required to officiate at their wedding.

A DOUBLE SUICIDE.

By Ludvig Anzengruber.

Two lovers are deprived of courtship on account of the enmity of their fathers. They write a letter announcing their intention of a double suicide. The fathers immediately institute a search for their children and in their mutual grief forget their past hatred. The youngsters are finally discovered in the mountains, billing and cooing to their hearts' content. A reconciliation is effected.

STAINED HONOR.

By Ludvig Anzengruber.

A servant marries a rich peasant. Her former employer finds her jewelry missing and has the girl imprisoned. It is later discovered that the valuables had merely been misplaced but out of shame the woman remains silent. The servant is released from prison but upon being charged with theft by her young husband she resolves to commit suicide. The woman has confessed her error on her death bed and the husband learns of it just in time to avert the catastrophe.

THE ACHARIANS.

By Aristophanes.

An Athenian citizen who is enraged at the continued war with Sparta buys his individual peace from the enemy. Theatrical training obtained from Euripides aids him in quieting the protests of his countrymen. He builds an enclosure around his home where he opens a free market for friend and foe alike. Here feasting and revelling mock the lamentations of war and the Play ends with this contrast carried to the highest point.

L Y S I S T R A T A .

By Aristophanes.

The women of Athens combine against the men denying all domestic intercourse. Under the guidance of their chieftain, "Lysistrata," they take possession of the fortifications. Most ridiculous situations result from the plight to which the husbands are reduced by this enforced separation. Peace is finally concluded through ambassadors from the belligerent parties under the direction of the diplomatic "Lysistrata."

A L I A S J I M M Y V A L E N T I N E .

By Paul Armstrong.

Through the influence of a girl he has protected from insult and who falls in love with him, a safe-breaker is pardoned from prison and made assistant-cashier of a bank. Here he is sought on an old crime by a detective, whom he completely deludes, when a sister accidentally is locked in a safe. The detective discovers him opening the safe, but lets him go because of his heroism and the girl's love.

T H E D E E P P U R P L E .

By Paul Armstrong.

A crook decoys an innocent girl under promise of marriage, and induces her to lure a wealthy man to a deserted apartment, into which he bursts in the role of the injured husband. Convinced of the girl's innocence the man rescues the girl and weds her. The crook is killed by an old enemy.

B

D A M O N A N D P Y T H I A S .

By John Banister.

A man, condemned to death by a tyrant, obtains leave to bid his wife farewell on the condition that his friend becomes his hostage. The man is delayed and his friend is about to be killed in his place. At the crucial moment he arrives. Moved by this loyalty the tyrant pardons the condemned man.

T H E A D M I R A B L E C R I C H T O N .

By J. M. Barrie.

A family of the nobility is stranded on an island where self-preservation becomes the paramount issue. In this emergency their servant proves the only practical mind. He organizes the new colony assigning such elementary duties as each can perform. As the directing genius he gradually evolves from servant to master. The family waits on him hand and foot and the daughter eventually accepts his proposal of marriage with due humility. A ship rescues the party and they return to civilization and to their respective ranks of social position.

ALICE SIT BY THE FIRE.

By J. M. Barrie.

A girl's susceptive imagination has been unduly fed on melodramatic nonsense in her mother's absence. She overhears an appointment made by her mother and jumps at the conclusion it is a lascivious romance. The child repairs to the supposed lover's rooms inspired by the heroic thought of reclaiming her wayward parent. The mother is horrified at finding her daughter concealed in a bachelor's apartment. Each thinks the other hopelessly compromised. The poor mother's anxiety is finally relieved by the child's attitude of dramatic rescue.

BRIDES OF ARROGONIA.

By Michel Beer.

A King decrees that of his two daughters, the one selected by a prince shall become ruler. The first daughter whom the prince loves has been pledged, by her Mother's vow, to enter a convent. The second daughter, jealous of the prince attempts to dispose of her sister. The latter outwits her by committing suicide. The prince now kills himself for grief and the second daughter takes poison. The surviving Queen sees the havoc caused by her vow.

S T R U E N S E E

By Michel Beer

A prime minister of Denmark seeks to spread enlightenment in his kingdom. The Queen, a former English princess, favors his ambition. Jealous members of the royal family procure his arrest and persuade the Queen to acknowledge his love for her under the false pretense that this fact will liberate the man she really admires. This seals his fate and he is condemned to death.

T H E P A R I A H.

By Michel Beer

A widow who is to be burned according to Indian custom is rescued by an outlaw, whom she marries. An Indian who becomes infatuated with her, would kill the outlaw but she prevents. The Indian learns of her illegal rescue, discovers that she is his own sister and resolves to have them both executed. They take poison. Touched by their behaviour, the brother promises to care for their child.

THE LILY.

By David Belasco.

A woman of the upper classes has wasted youth, love, and happiness because of her father's class prejudice. When she beholds her younger sister about to be sacrificed in the same fashion she solemnly protests. In a fierce outburst of passion she turns upon her father and demands for her sister the privilege of love as a birthright.

THE RETURN OF PETER GRIMM.

By David Belasco.

A man betroths his ward to his nephew in order to perpetuate the family name. After death he learns of the young man's dissolute character from inhabitants of the spirit world and returns to right the wrong committed. In pathetic helplessness his suffering spirit strives to communicate this fact to his ward. He finally succeeds in apprising her of his mistake through the medium of a child—the illicit offspring of his nephew. The ward is governed by his supernatural message and is united to the man she loves.

A R T I C L E 47.

By Adolphe Belot

An imperceptible mulatto is loved by a white man and attempts to leave him when her negro blood is in danger of detection. Crazed by jealousy he shoots her and is imprisoned for five years. According to Article 47 he remains under police surveillance. He escapes, assumes another name and marries happily. The mulatto has searched for him in vain. She finally discovers him and divulges his past, but the wife's love conquers. The negress goes hopelessly insane.

A C O M E D Y

By Jules Roderich Benedir

A bachelor inherits a fortune and seeks the hand of his landlady's daughter. She hesitates and he ventures to propose to a second girl who also postpones an answer, for she loves some one else. He engages himself to the first when he suddenly discovers a third girl whom he really loves. All three girls celebrate their betrothal to him. Love claims the other two and he is left to his third and best choice.

C I N D E R E L L A

By Jules Roderich Benedir

A child, deserted in a boarding school, has been reared as a servant. She meets a count incog, who falls in love with her. Later she is compelled to run away and in an exhausted condition is brought to the count's castle where she is discovered to be his uncle's natural daughter. The count is convinced that she loves him for himself alone and they are betrothed.

S A M S O N .

By Henri Bernstein.

A dock laborer of rare mental vigor makes a large fortune in stocks and weds a society beauty. A man tries to win her affections and the husband engages in a financial battle to defeat him. By clever stock manipulations he ruins his rival even though he wrecks his own fortune in the attempt.

I S R A E L .

By Henri Bernstein.

A young aristocrat insults a dignified old Jewish banker wishing to involve him in a duel. The Jew applies to the youth's mother who in turn beseeches her son not to press the quarrel. In a gruelling cross-examination the boy follows up the motive of this strange request until at last he wrings from her the confession that the banker is his illegitimate father. Despite the latter's attempt to reconcile him to his fate the boy commits suicide.

Z A Z A .

By Berton.

An actress falls in love with a man and lives happily with him until he tires of her. She hears that he is married and confirms this fact by a visit to his family. She pretends that she has exposed his infidelity. He condemns her. Later they meet. She has risen to great fame and he is free to marry her. She still loves him but has been too cruelly deceived and bids him adieu.

M A D A M E X

By Alexander Bisson

A drug-drenched woman murders her paramour to avoid his revealing her identity to her son. An advocate is appointed to defend her. Upon announcement of his name the woman shrieks. She realizes it is her son. He believes his mother dead. He makes an eloquent plea for the life of his client interpreting her obstinate silence as a desire to shelter some innocent person whom she loves—a son, perhaps. Only the woman and audience know the truth. She is acquitted. She dies in the arms of her advocate acknowledging her maternal relation to him.

A G A U N T L E T

By Bjornson

A girl reared in innocence, is betrothed to a man of the world. Each fancies that no predecessor has won the other's affection. When she learns of a compromising intrigue in her lover's past she hurls her glove in his face and breaks the engagement. She learns that she has been living in a fool's paradise. The man does penance and the girl gives him a vague hope of future reconciliation.

B E Y O N D T H E I R S T R E N G T H

By Bjornson

A faith healing clergyman lives in an overstrained ecstasy and forces his wife to the same high nervous tension. She is finally stricken with paralysis. The priest determines to heal her by fervid prayer. A tremendous avalanche sweeps down the mountain but divides at the parsonage. The two are unharmed. It is a miracle! The wife now rises! She falls upon her husband's neck amid great rejoicings! She is dead! Overwhelmed by the shock the clergyman falls dead at her side.

L A B O R E M U S.

By Bjornson.

A poor composer is captivated by a girl who marries a rich widower. After marriage her sensuality leads to an illicit relation with the composer. Her step-daughter intercepts them and the harlot is unmasksed.

T H E K I N G .

By Bjornson

A young, liberal minded king condemns the sham and pomp of his position. He marries the daughter of a prisoner who earnestly aids in his mission of royal regeneration. His subjects are scandalized at this union with their own sort. The bride dies as a result of fanatic hatred and a father's curse. The king commits suicide realizing the futility of his efforts to establish a democratic monarchy.

T H E N E W L Y - W E D S .

By Bjornson

A young lawyer marries the spoiled daughter of a wealthy official. Exasperated by her obstinate immaturity he removes her from the pampered influence of her parents. Her eyes are opened by an anonymous novel reflecting the dangers ahead. The book is written by one of her friends who also awakens her jealousy. Womanhood finally asserts itself in the wife and a reconciliation follows.

T O - D A Y A N D Y E S T E R D A Y .

By Oscar Blumenthal.

A woman marries a widower whom she does not love. She becomes easy prey for a seducer and afterwards falls honestly in love with her husband. The seducer meantime reforms and asks for the hand of her step-daughter. To prevent the match the woman divulges their past but only succeeds in winning the girl's contempt. Unable to confess the burden on her soul to her husband who is now seized with heart failure, she takes poison.

SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE.

By Geraldine Bonner.

A wife is piqued at her husband's flirtations with a suffragette and takes dinner with an old admirer to arouse return-jealousy. The husband intercepts the tete-a-tete and is ready to kill his rival when the wife confesses to her little scheme to taunt him.

COLLEEN BAWN.

By Dion Boucicault.

A young man is secretly married to the girl he loves. He is in debt and the only way to avoid embarrassment is to marry an heiress. His servant, wishing to assist his master, tries to drown the wife. The husband is accused of murder when the wife appears to save him.

LONDON ASSURANCE.

By Dion Boucicault.

A young man, facing imprisonment for debt, falls in love with a girl to whom his father is engaged. A brazen young scapegrace entraps the father into such a ridiculous predicament, that he is obliged to pay his son's debts and let him marry the young woman.

A VISIT.

By Edward Brandes.

A girl is the victim of a libertine. She afterwards marries a socialist who in reality is a sensualist. The seducer turns up and insults her in her husband's home. This leads to her husband's discovery of the past and he is about to cast her off when his admiration leads him to interpret her behavior as consistent with his socialistic theories.

BOUGHT AND PAID FOR.

By George Broadhurst.

A financier marries a telephone girl and supports her worthless brother-in-law. The girl leaves her husband after a brutal assault, virtually constituting a rape. In order to regain his position the brother-in-law tricks the pair into a reconciliation.

THE LADY OF LYONS.

By Bulwer-Lytton.

A farmer's son falls in love with an heiress who repels his advances. Other rejected suitors conspire to disguise him as an Italian prince to revenge themselves on the girl. He marries her and takes her to the farm house of his Mother where he confesses. In spite of her broken pride she loves him, but

her parents insist on separation. The boy enlists to atone for his deception. He distinguishes himself in battle and acquires a fortune. In the meantime the bride's parents have become impoverished and to save them she is about to marry a former suitor whom she abhors. Her husband returns in time to save her this fate.

R I C H E L I E U.

By Bulwer-Lytton.

A Cardinal has condemned to death a young daredevil who is in love with his ward. By aiding to put down a conspiracy which threatens the Cardinal's life the youth earns his pardon and the hand of the girl.

T H E C A V E M A N.

By Gelett Burgess.

A lady of quality undertakes to polish an uncouth coal-heaver. She introduces the transformed ruffian to an ambitious debutante who falls in love with him. But the ex-coal-heaver aspires to the hand of his lady champion and she finally awakens to the real man she has developed in him.

C

Plots by authors of the letter C, begin in the October, 1912, issue.

Playwriting

Are you satisfied with the progress you are making as a playwright? Are you content to spend the best years of your life in an effort to master dramatic composition? Are you content to continue in the bitter and gruelling school of experience of the "try, try again"—hit or miss theory? Or are you willing to take a short cut to the mastery of your Art?

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